

JIGSAW TALENT MANAGEMENT

MONTHLY MARKET REPORT

DECEMBER 2021



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Introduction

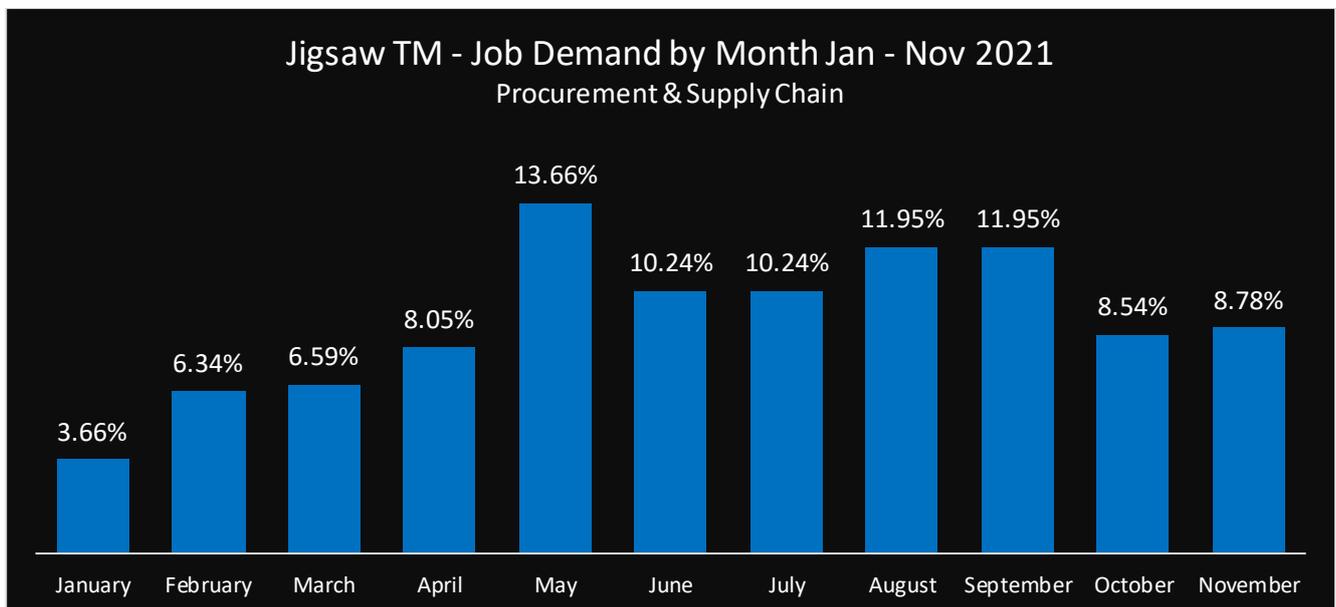
For the December report, Jigsaw will focus on the past year, looking at the data to see if we can accurately guide you to trends that may take shape in 2022 across the procurement and supply chain sector in Australia. In addition to this analysis, we will also attempt to explore the topic of communication, which is a much requested and valued skill set, but unlike tertiary qualifications and technical experience, less understood. Jigsaw will attempt to offer our view on communication, then focus on the components that go towards improving. We have broken down communication into 4 segments that include base personality, physical, written and language. Jigsaw look at filling (we explain), emotional communication, interpretation, meaning and the equity of language.

Jigsaw's inputs presented in this month's article come from our experiences assisting professionals achieve favourable outcomes when seeking career progression. By our own admittance, Jigsaw are not the authority on best practice communication. As a business, we too are always seeking to improve the capability within our own enterprise. In admitting this, we believe we know enough to set people on the right path. If our perspective sparks a desire for any of our valued network to seek to improve their communications skills, then Jigsaw consider this a successful exercise.

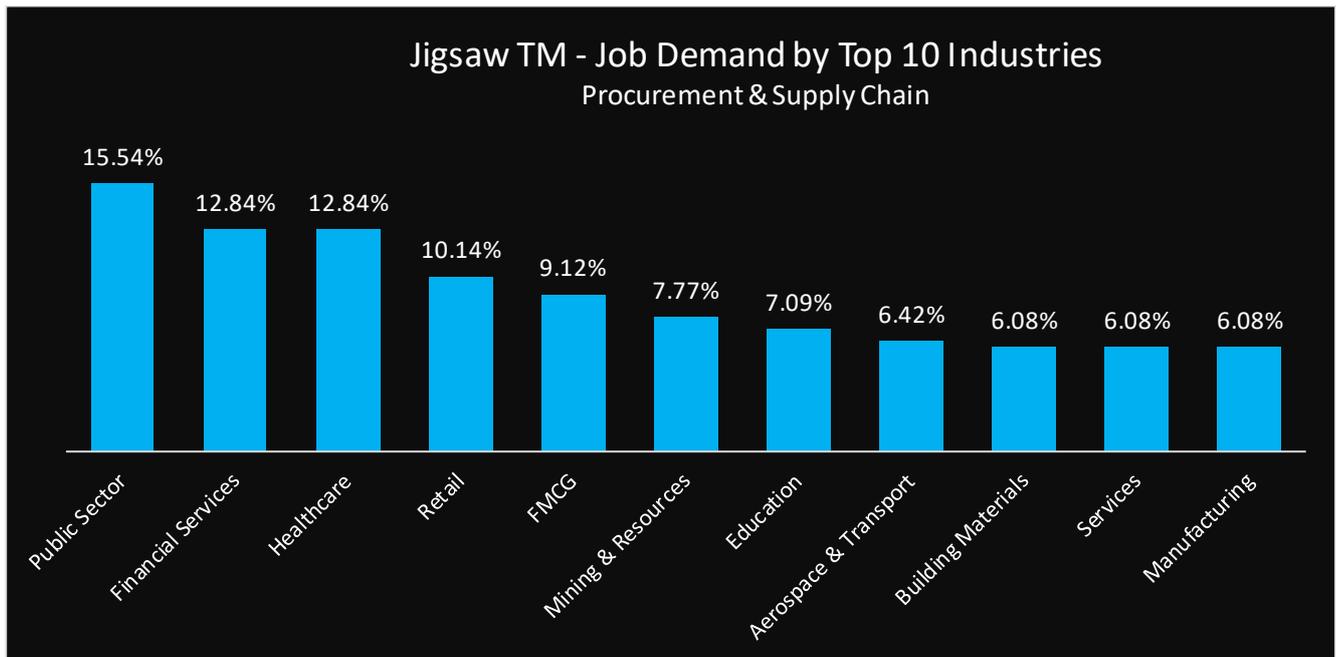
As always, we hope you enjoy our content, and we look forward to working with you in 2022. From all of us at Jigsaw, we hope you have a truly fantastic end of year break.

A Market Review 2021

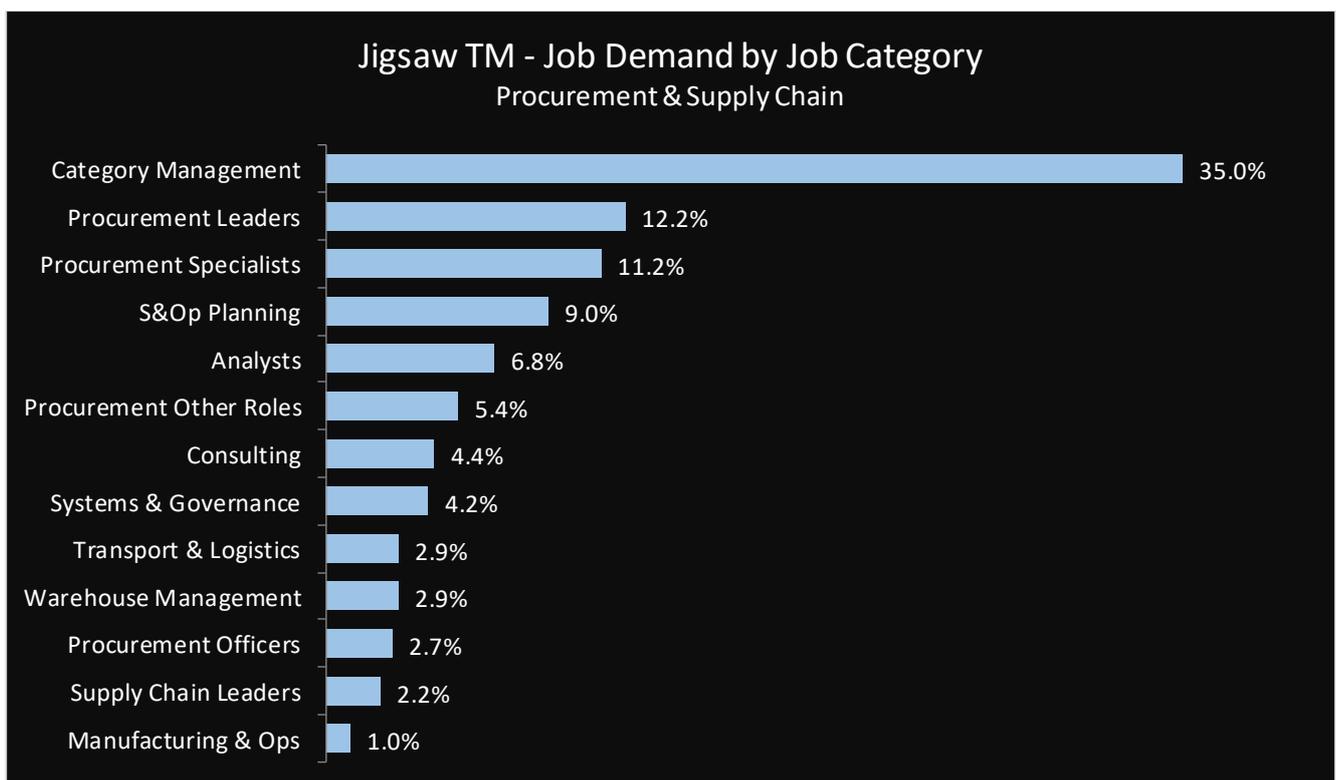
January was the weakest month (3.66%) of total job flow, with peak job flow recorded in May (13.66%) following a gradual pick up through the months Feb through to April. The final two quarters of the calendar year remained strong, with July sitting at (10.24%) and August/September holding at (11.95%). As we head into the festive season, job demand is averaging at 8% – 9%, which is stronger than previous years and elevated above the 1st two quarters of the calendar year.



The most dominant sector was Public Sector, accounting for over (15%) of total job volume, supported by Financial Services and Healthcare both at (+12%) of annual demand, Retail contributed (10.14%), FMCG (9.12%) and Mining (+7%). Weakest demand came from Automotive, Online Retail, Electronics, Medical Supplies, Agriculture, Industrials, Energy, Hospitality, Technology, Construction and Property Services. Industries that Jigsaw would classify as awakening re demand for supply chain and procurement resources included Consulting, Manufacturing, Aerospace, Transport, and Materials, with each sector contributing between +6% of total annual demand throughout the year.



Jigsaw recorded an increase in permanent appointments to previous years at (58.78%), with non-fixed term contractors contributing (32.20%) and fixed term (8.78%). This is an inverse trend to pre Covid-19 markets, which typically saw contractor demand sitting at (60%) vs permanent demand at (40%). Jigsaw analysis indicates organisations are making significant and long-term changes to the structure of their supply chains as they pivot to risk from efficiency, in turn increasing demand for local resources across the entire supply chain. Warehouse management, transport management and sales and operations planning saw resource demand increases over (200%). For procurement, category management was still the dominant vertical, contributing to a 3rd of all transactions at (35%), supported by an increase in senior procurement appointments at (12.2%). Again, this increase in senior procurement demand is evidence of economic pressure across the entire industry complex, demonstrating the need for commercial inputs to offset the threats of inflation and 3rd party risk because of liquidity stress or geopolitical threats.



From January through to April, contractor demand outstripped permanent demand, the bulk of which came from Public Sector and Financial Services. As Jigsaw headed into May the market aggressively shifted into a permanent cycle. Demand stayed consistent throughout in public sector for contract resources but tailed off in banking. Permanent demand came from mining, manufacturing and FMCG. Jigsaw see this trend continuing into 2022, as we forecasted in our September market report a selection of sectors that we believe will flourish in the Build Back Better economy.

Jigsaw's top sector for 2022 is Mining. The Mining Sector is rapidly increasing capability across opex portfolio's, as ESG policies coupled with volatile market conditions are ensuring more commercial discipline is exercised across ICT and Corporate Services. This is likely due to China's economy being on the brink of a potential collapse (see Jigsaw reports in both [October](#) and [November](#) for reasons). Another concern for the mining sector is the energy crisis. As countries shun investment in fossil fuels the inputs to mining operations are going to skyrocket (JP Morgan predicting \$150bbl). Capex investment in oil, coal and gas has been limited over the past decade and this will push energy prices into the heavens. Compounding this is labour inflation and a change in global appetites across commodities. Coal, Iron Ore, and other materials that contributed to economic growth are shifting to commodities that focus more on an economic transition. Copper is the oil of the electric economy, supported by lithium, nickel and manganese. In addition to the electric revolution, agriculture-based commodities such as phosphate fertiliser and Potash (MOP/SOP) will be growth sectors of the mining complex. These changes will mean large mining organisations will need strong balance sheets to support aggressive M&A activity as the swoop up globally relevant deposits or JV with the juniors to bolster supply of these commodities.

Jigsaw holds the least confidence for Financial Services over the long term. Again, the full reasoning can be found in our [September](#) report, but as a quick refresh, banking balance sheets are between a rock and a hard place. Low interest rates do not serve banks well, as this is how the sector traditionally makes profits. Government intervention can and has offset these problems, but they are not sustainable. If interest rates rise, the assets lent into the market come under stress and de-value (Stocks and Property). This will not only reduce assets by 10% best scenario and 40% worst, but it will also diminish the markets appetite for lending placing further pressure on commercials.

In addition to this economic storm that the central banks, to their credit, have so far walked the tight rope without falling, there is the very real agenda of a central bank take over at the macro level and a fintech attack re products and services at the operational level.

As banking fees and risk increase to offset low interest margins, many people are turning to alternatives to store their wealth. Fiat currency is losing value to real assets, and all fiat currencies around the world are plummeting at record rates, people no longer trust central bank policy. Bullion banks are seeing a surge in people trading in fiat currency for silver, crypto and gold bullion. Crypto debit cards are allowing blockchain assets to be more easily utilised for payments and credit creation. If these trends continue and people turn to alternatives, banking relevance will be in question. Of course, as with any threat to a system, measures are being taken to offset risks caused by crypto assets. It is certainly going to be a very interesting sector to watch over the next 10 years.

As a quick refresh, here are Jigsaw's opinions on the markets to participate in over the next decade – [Jigsaw's September Report 2021](#)

The lasting impression of 2021 will be the shortage of available talent in Australia across the supply chain. A decade of offshoring jobs has left the Australian market wanting, as supply chain operations restructured and demand for talent increased. In addition to inflated fiscal assets enabling people to not have to work (single asset lending is likely to be adjusted as we move into 2022), in the near term, labour productivity and utilisation also took a hit. Covid-19 constraints meant many workers were underutilised or paid to not take part in operations, and the halt on immigration impacted the availability of the flexible workforce whilst contributing to wage inflation for skill in high demand. Jigsaw believe these issues will still exist in 2022. As immigration becomes a key strategy for the Australian government to inject much needed human resources and capital into the markets, it could be met with an equal volume of labour leaving Australian shores or



certain States. Demand for supply chain talent will increase further on this backdrop, as businesses continue to find the right balance of risk, agility, efficiency, and cost across their operations.

Communication

There are many factors that contribute to a successful career that include education, experience, drive, planning, environment, networks, even luck. There are also many things' people can do, in addition to the aforementioned factors, to assist them to compete for opportunities, including appropriate dress, punctuality, a sound resume, a networked talent manager, career planning and research. Sometimes, even when all these criteria are addressed, many people can still fail to achieve the career trajectory they seek. Jigsaw consultants have taken many calls over the years from supply chain professionals who have been rejected for a promotion internally or a role externally. Often, they have all the tangible boxes ticked as we have outlined, yet something is holding them back. Most of the time, that thing is communication. Skilled communication contributes greatly to success in all areas of a person's existence, especially in the business environment.

We understand communication is an obvious attribute to success. Since we evolved and created language, humans have been developing this critical skill. For most of us, from about 9 months old, we predictably gurgled our first word, which would have sounded like "Dadda". It is the fact communication is so obvious as a requirement in our social fabric, it's a core reason so many of us are ironically underdeveloped at it. To explain, let's look at mobility, as it is another critical attribute we develop from birth. We start learning to walk at circa 6 months old, give or take. As a result, we believe we are capable walkers. We walk everywhere, to the bus, to the shops and around the offices that employ us. Of course, we can walk!

Now, let's take running. We learn to run at circa two years old, in a sort of wobbly, fall on our face at any moment kind of way. Like walking, most people would assume that they are capable of running, even if it's not very fast or far. So, we develop communication, walking and running skills from an early phase in our development arc, but are we really any good at it? We are good enough at these attributes to meet the demands of our lifestyles, but what about the demands of our employers? Unless you want to be a postman, walking and running are likely not required on the position, however, communication is always a requested attribute and often near the top of the list.

If we as a species are all sufficient at communicating, why do companies bother requesting it as a developed skill? There is reason, and many of us won't like it.

We are at best amateur walkers, amateur runners and unfortunately against our self-evaluation, amateur communicators. Businesses do not mind you being a complete amateur at mobility, it is not a critical to you delivering value to shareholders. They do however care if your communication skills are amateur, and when hiring, companies want professional communication ability. The gap between what many businesses require and what many of us feel is satisfactory is often a key reason for career stagnation.

If we review a professional walker or runner from the standard person we quickly realise and accept we are far down the ladder in terms of our potential locomotive abilities. Professional sprinters are cracking sub 10 seconds for the 100m, professional walkers hit 5mph and cover 20km in under 90 minutes. When it comes to communication, we are fantastic at it, whilst in our own comfort zone. We get by fine with family, friends and down the mall. With our friends and family, they are forgiving of our elongated, inefficient explanations; our exaggerations; our abbreviations and slangs. Our communication in these casual situations almost morphs into its own echo chamber, further promoting ever lazier or more customised dialect. Outside of family and friends, shops, and restaurants only care for the transaction. If we can explain what we want on the menu or the shelf, profits are taken without judgement. At least no judgement we are aware of. If we reflect further on how many of us do not have communication down to a fine art, we only must consider telephone interaction, where physical cues are removed, and it gets even harder. Many of us have been on the end of a call attempting to articulate an issue and feel like we are getting nowhere fast. If we progress further down the communication chain, we encounter the minefield of emails and texts. There is no better medium to miscommunicate than when both visual cues and tone are removed from the exchange.

Communication is a tricky skill to develop into a professional attribute, more than we realise. Luckily for us, the communication benchmark for a long lasting and rewarding career are not the same as to be a professional runner. Communication's social necessity and low barrier to entry of labelling ensure we do ourselves an injustice. Jigsaw have written similar articles on procurement and negotiation, two skills that also fall into the same category as communication, as they are required attributes outside of a business framework. Many people must engage in buying and negotiating in their day to day lives, such as when buying a car etc. They do not have to engage in double entry ledgers or marketing. There is a broad-based amateur level of these skills owned by each one of us, but that does not mean that we are in any way good at it or achieve the outcomes that a professional would. The world is not saturated with Henry Kissingers and Barack Obamas.

The skill of communication, as a default attribute to get by in society, is under further threat from the rapid advancements of digitisation, so improvement is unlikely across future generations unless pro-active steps are taken. Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram and Twitter have enabled people to obtain stimulus without the requirement to interact face to face. Digital platforms create new styles of written language. Communication only needs to be bite sized. Content to capture the "likes" which trigger endorphins can be a simple photo or meme. Then there are the e-play dates, wasting hours on games such as Fortnite or Roadblocks. In the 90's, you would play games in the same room as your mates, interacting face to face. You would squabble over the joystick and take turns to achieve high scores. You would go down the park to play touch rugby, football, or tag. These interactions would develop character, resolve, a sense of self and skills would be learnt to interact with a vast array of different characters.

It is possible the base level of communication skills for future generations could be lower than previous generations, although no doubt they would have increased capabilities in technology. Children today are digitally literate and can work their way through an iPhone and computer faster than many of us adults. If in life you want to be a technician and never progress to being a Manger or Director, then that is fine. Unfortunately, evolution works slowly, and until we use thoughts to influence and communicate, have chips implanted in our heads, we will, for present time, still judge people on how they interact with others face to face, be it an interview, meetings, or presentations.

If we want to be better at communicating, it may help to understand what we are dealing with beyond the label itself. Look at what elements are included under the umbrella term. We can then explore the physical, mental, written, visual, verbal facets and gain a better understanding of where we can develop.

Communication is the skill of migrating information from point A to point B, with both A and B taking on any number of facets, be it a person, animal, place, or peripheral. Many scientists believe that communication has only been around in the form of language from circa 300,000 – 200,000 years ago, enabled by the modern human's larynx being situated lower in the throat than previous primates. However modern theories are starting to debunk this idea, suggesting that the larynx had evolved far earlier, back to the time when humans shared a common ancestor with monkeys 27 million years ago. If interested in pursuing this separate topic, there is a great article in "The Atlantic" written by Rachel Gutman.

Base Personality

People's personalities do not neatly fit into absolute criteria. The traits that make up a personality are like waves that pulse dependent on external stimulus. A person can be confident in one environment and anxious in another. A person can be calm and engaging with one person yet aggressive with another. It is also true that a person can be overconfident or too calm. Assets taken to the extreme can easily switch into a liability. How we feel at a given moment in time impacts how we communicate. If we are agitated, it impacts how we engage the counter party, which impacts how they engage us. Verbal articulation is impaired, visually we can give off negative energy, and the value we bring to the situation is compromised. Adding to the issue, the counter party can change how they receive our information. Listening and processing happens best when both parties are calm and relaxed. A great example we can all relate to is when we are on hold for 20 minutes to sort out a banking issue or internet problem. By the time we get to engage a real person, we have answered 10 questions from a bot, been forced to listen to the same 3 adverts on repeat and been sonically violated with music that could be used to torture terrorists. This changes how we engage and communicate when we finally connect with a real person. The call centre help desk is no doubt a hostile environment.



Our base personalities cannot be changed. From the age of 6 – 10, our fundamental base traits are developed. We cannot change who we are, but we can manage who we are, and this is a skill that successful people master. There is us, the person, that our family and friends love, then there is us the professional. The difference between the two is awareness and discipline. It is controlling traits that present little value in the professional environment, constantly working on them to minimise their impacts and letting our traits that are assets flow freely to drive outcomes. Understanding our core personality is the starting point for developing our professional communication. If we can master our emotions through discipline, we can then stabilise our platform and allow our assets to surface, thus improving our net equity, corporate value, and productivity.

A good way to help make the change is to view it from a different perspective. We are paid to bring our skills to the employer for 8-9 hours a day. Hard assets which are the raw skills include reporting, analytics, strategy, risk, marketing etc. In this time frame we are also paid to bring all our softer/intangible assets to the workplace, which include the best version of us, the version of us that has developed discipline of self to improve engagement with the wider business. After all, it is the ability to engage that allows the other skills we possess to create value for the employer and our career.

Physical Communication

Visual signalling is a key part of communication. How we walk, sit, gesture, our overall posture sends messages to counter parties. Confidence for instance, can be portrayed in movement more so than in verbal dialogue. This is a key reason self-defence classes advise people to walk tall, with chin up and good posture. It says, in a subtle way, I am not a victim so do not try anything. Animals use posture and physical movement to communicate. Lizards and birds flare scales and wings, Hippos show their teeth, and some fish puff up like balloons. If you own a pet dog, you can quickly tell what is going on with the animal's mental state just by witnessing how it holds its head, ears, tail, and spine. Practising physical signals is a simple way to improve how we present to potential employers or stakeholders. It is all part of professional communication and is as important as dressing smart, having good hygiene, and engaging counter parties with eye contact.

A good skill to learn is using our hands when talking. Not in a manic way, just enough for enforcing key points or statements. A subtle hand gesture can add some much-needed dynamism to sterile subjects or formal interactions. If we watch key speakers or leading politicians engage in public forums, we can see many supporting the verbal engagement with movements of their arms and hands. The technique when employed well is kind of like driving a car. When we drive, the hands on the steering wheel inputting the degree of lock must coordinate with the feet for braking or accelerating. When both are synced harmoniously the chassis of the car is balanced, tyre traction is optimised and a smoother, faster drive is the result. The same can be applied to physical hand gestures syncing in with verbal narrative. When both work together in harmony, the added outcome is superior engagement, and in turn, greater progress.

Written Communication

How we communicate in written form is one of the more critical elements to our success in either securing employment or progressing our career. It is also one of the more technical aspects of the communication spectrum that can be very challenging to get right and is the least forgiven by counter parties. As an added liability, written communication is also recorded and stored in the digital world. Luckily, written communication is also one area where technology has progressed to enable even the worst of us to produce basic improvements in spelling and grammar. Still, even with the advancements in spell check and other supporting technologies, it is amazing how many people have basic spelling errors in their resumes.

Written communication is, like verbal communication, situational. In a state of operational flow or with nonprofessional situations, allowances are made for lazy, abbreviated or even completely misplaced communication. No doubt, even the most skilled written communicators draft a poorly worded email or text in a working day. We all do it, as the outcome in the workday is to deliver a project on time or get a message across quickly to be more productive. Typically, the people we take such liberties with already know us, we have built up a certain equity or respect with them. This is the same as athletes playing a team sport who are

progressing through the season and have a shorthand communication style to dictate plays etc. The issue is when we do not distinguish between the two situations, poor written communication bleeds into the wrong circumstance and credibility is destroyed. The hard truth is, we have all done it. None of us are perfect enough to sail through our careers, or more realistically, an entire year without emailing or texting at least one grenade. Whether it be misjudging the equity we have with the counter party or simply our discipline on our base traits got off leash, we are not perfect. Humanity makes its way into even our best version of who we are. With this being recognised, the best we can do is minimise the volume of incidents that can damage our progress in our professional lives.

So how can we improve and reduce the damage of written communication? The first step is minimising the errors we make in BAU communication to counter parties where equity is minimal to non-existent. If your communication is to parties outside of our equity spectrum, be it customers, peers, potential employers, or employees, then extra time should be taken to ensure spelling and grammar are acceptable. Often, people feel there are only so many hours in a day and over-investing in administrative elements can be counterproductive. This is true, so planning and positioning are the key to ensuring we can produce a bulk of written communication that does not distract from the other hundred tasks we have to juggle in each timeline. One solution is to take a day and dedicate it to writing all our content that we use when engaging external/non familiar parties and store it for easy access. This allows us to scale well drafted content that may only require slight adjustments for individual parties, ensuring it is still personally addressed and relevant to a given subject. Ensure all facets of the communication criteria are addressed, especially the correspondence required for disputes/conflict. This preplanning ensures our communication has discipline and is detached from the real time emotions we may be feeling at the time of communicating. We have all sat at a keyboard and written a response to a dispute in an emotionally triggered state. We can agree it takes three times as long, has three times the number of edits and is read out at least to three times as many people prior to sending, if we even send it. Of course, the counter party who receives this written grenade can be sure to mirror our actions as they embrace the circus of battle and counter. If it helps, and we want to waste time and be counterproductive, we can still write the correspondence we wanted to send to soothe our emotional needs, then quickly delete it and send the professional version we drafted prior and move on to more productive matters that enhance our progress.

Another consideration is to reduce the number of texts, especially with stakeholders, colleagues and external parties that are not familiar. Texting can be hazardous as the medium promotes short messaging which can easily be misread or taken out of context. Worse still, it is very easy to send a text to the wrong party entirely. The unfortunate receiver may not be so fond of what we are planning to do with them later, it could induce violent vomiting from their side and forever damage a business arrangement. Many people feel texting is too familiar, intrusive almost. Better to make a habit of emailing or calling as a primary means of communication and only ever text when necessary.

Resume building is another area where preparation is required to yield the best results and where written communication skills can deliver huge value. This document is our brochure representing us, the asset. It represents who we are as a person in written form. There is no more important document we can construct than our resume. If we have a resume that has spelling mistakes, poor use of language and grammar, or is just poorly structured, then we are negatively impacting our career. We in Jigsaw have seen literally thousands of resumes over the past 18 years. It is always surprising to see how many errors are in at least 30% of the resumes we receive. We are not selecting structural issues in the content in this 30%, as that is open to subjective preference. We are talking about spelling and grammatical errors, which modern technology can fix and hence, is unacceptable.

When building a resume Jigsaw always advise our customers to develop two documents. A chronological version that captures dates, employers, etc with detail only elaborated on that uses time as a measurement for relevance, which is typically our most recent employer or recent 5 years of employment history. In addition to the chronological document, we also advise customers to develop a one-page achievement focused document that can display career achievements outside of the constraints of time. This allows a rigid chrono document to co-exist with a dynamic document, enabling potential employers to understand our career progression yet also clearly explore the achievements that are most relevant to the role we are applying. When developing the achievement focused document, we can cut and paste pre drafted



achievements from a list we have built on a home platform. Jigsaw recommend circa 5 achievements to be included in this document with clear headings as to what the achievements are addressing. For more information on this, please just email us and we are happy to provide templates and guides. You do not have to be in procurement or supply chain to gain value from these templates.

As with verbal communication, which we will get to in the next segment, when building a resume, terminology matters. When writing down achievements, role summary, career summary or company description, positioning the correct terminology is critical to the resume making an impact. As an example of using terminology to ensure a resume is fit for purpose and correctly calibrated to experience, ensure you distinguish between responsibilities and achievements. If you are a mid to senior level professional, do not allocate resume real estate to responsibilities, or at least keep them to a minimum. Ideally responsibilities should be covered in a higher-level role overview. At a certain career point, employers are buying our services for achievements and not for responsibilities. They are hiring us for productivity and improvements to a given technical, managerial, or strategic initiative. If we think about it, responsibilities are things we must do, they are chores and lean to reactive energy. Achievements are things we pro-actively embark on. Achievements can only happen because there is a situation to exploit or a problem to be solved. Many times, it is a combination of the two and we pro-actively take up the challenge to deliver benefits to stakeholders and equity holders by improving cost exposure, (potential/real), reducing opex or increasing profits.

Understanding when to make this change in information presentation between responsibilities and achievements is key to securing interviews as we progress from junior roles through to mid management level and so on. As a junior professional with only 1 – 5 years in each career is more likely aligned to responsibilities, hence the resume real estate will have more allocated space for this. Essentially, we would be reporting into a manager who directs our tasks. These tasks are administrative, and process driven. They are important, as they are the bread and butter of the business activity, and it is the importance of the machine running that leaves little room for individual fulfilment once processes and basic business understanding is gained.

A mistake professionals often make is to attempt to cover both responsibilities and achievements, allocating symmetrical space for each segment. This creates information overkill and quickly pages mount up. Typically, the achievements follow the style of responsibilities, in that they are presented as statements with zero context. This can result in an interview not being secured, as the counter party cannot easily decipher a measurement of what was achieved and why it was important. Or it can result in a poor verbal delivery of the achievement in the interview as resume and interview performance have a strong correlation.

To summarise, written communication, when positioning emails, resumes and texts, it is important to ensure our content meets the situation. Resumes need to present to a counter party with the impression of preparation, thought and context. Anything less, most of the time will result in rejection, or we are just ensuring the recruiter engaged on our behalf is spending more time editing documents than positioning us in the marketplace. BAU communication in written format with outside counter parties should also be planned and written to offer scale and productivity of base correspondence, in addition to ensuring emotions are not synced to communication when conflict occurs. Texting and app communications can be considered invasive and over familiar, so if this is a desired channel, best for us to ask permission than to assume. Even once permission is granted, errors can lead to embarrassing situations.

The Spectrum of Language

If we cannot grasp being a professional level at verbal communication, what hope do we have? The issue is, the world has over seven billion people on it and each one of us, for the most part, can talk, so we should not be too hard on ourselves. The base standard is high. If we add in the fact that many people can not only talk at a professional level in one language, but they can also do it in several, our real-world limitations are no exaggeration. The good news is transcending from casual communication to a professional level is not out of the reach of any of us. The biggest challenge with verbal communication is the fact it happens in real time, so we cannot remove our emotions from interactions as we can with written. If we can assume, we have put some time into disciplining our base personality traits, then we can focus on some techniques and tricks to bridge the gap.

Verbal communication is the easiest to evaluate in terms of short comings yet is the trickiest to overcome. Verbal is constant and alive. With written, as we covered, there are tools to assist, and time is on our side to ensure content sent can meet requirement. Physical communication is fixed with good hygiene, smart and fit for purpose dress code, good posture, and if this is not enough, a more engaging interaction can be had with subtle hand gesturing, eye contact and perhaps a smile. Poor verbal communication can unravel our best efforts in physical and written, so let's see if we can break it down.

Filling

What is filling? Well, Jigsaw can advise you it is to fill a hole or some space with soft material, or it is to feel satiated. Jigsaw however are going to use this label for another meaning, which is to fill the time between words and sentences with either random phrases such as "You Know", "Yeah", "You See" and "Right" or just random noises that could be used in a kid's play toy with sounds like "uhhhhhh" and "mmmmmm". The amazing part of these fills is we really are not aware how often we do it, and we can assure you, 80% of people do it 100% of the time. It is a great exercise to request a recording of either a face-to-face meeting, video conference or telephone call without our knowledge of when this recording will take place and replay it back. We can warn you now, it is horrible. Listening to ourselves on replay at the best of times is confronting. When listening to the play back, we are seeking to see if we can simply listen in silence when it is the counter party's turn to speak, if we are able to string sentences together without making noises as we think, or, if we are able to finish a sentence without a filler word. Typically, when many people verbally communicate the "You See?" and "You Know?" can end each sentence. When the counter party is speaking, the listener plays a background vocal of "Mmmmm" or "Yeeeah". Sometimes, in addition to these fillers, in between sentences can contain "uhhhhhh" as new words are thought of.

To correct these patterns is hard and may never be totally achieved, even with the most dedicated efforts. Being aware of our filler words and noises however and attempting to correct them can have huge improvements to our overall communication. When we are truly silent when a counter party is talking, our brain is more focussed on listening and absorbing what is being said. When we are comfortable with silence, either in between our own dialogue or when listening to a counter party, we come across as more sincere, more credible, and more professional. Our sentences have more impact, our knowledge is presented more convincingly, and our interactions create more value.

Key to success of this exercise is to break communication patterns in small bites. Pick a filler (noise or word) and focus on eradicating that trait. Once achieved and the subconscious pattern is broken, select another filler. It does not take long to change and create a new subconscious behaviour that sets us up for a more professional level of verbal interaction. If we watch an elite communicator present, Barack Obama is a good one to watch, witness how he pauses, uses silence for impact and, drawing back to physical, watch his hand movements sync with his voice. He never uses fillers, at least not when presenting in public. We all can't achieve this level of excellence, especially in real day to day life, but still, all improvements assist us on our journey of development and to fulfil our ambitions.

Emotional Communication

The language we use to engage counter parties determines many aspects of our life. Language is the core component of verbal communication. The choice of words we use and the efficiency of structuring words in sentences impacts our relationships. Language is amazingly complex, so complex in fact, if an alien visited earth, they would no doubt be confused with how our use of language synced with our behaviours, even if they understood the academic meaning of words. Many of the words we use have more than one meaning, depending on the structure they are incorporated into. In addition, the tone applied to a given word changes its intent from being complimentary to insulting or from kind to cruel. Language also directs our morality. We are brought up in society and learn what is right from wrong. Our behaviours have words to describe them. Honesty is good, lying is bad. Loyalty is good, disloyalty is bad. Fairness is good, unfairness is bad. Our understanding of these labels dictates how we communicate and behave in all aspects of our life.

Let's take the word honesty, which has a positive connotation. We default that honesty is a virtuous trait.



For instance, we find a wallet in the street with \$1,000 in it. We then source the owner's details and return it to them with all the money still inside. On the flip side, we can use honesty to hurt people, either intentionally or unintentionally. Intentionally it could be an acquaintance who we advise has bad breath. The fact may be on point, but no doubt the person is going to feel embarrassed on receiving this truth. Unintentionally we could be caught in a chain of vices which places us, an innocent party, in a crossfire where our honesty could have consequences. For instance, we know a friend's partner is cheating on them, the friend has children, and is aware the partner's actions seem suspicious. They ask us if we know anything. Do we straight out tell them? Do we confront the partner first and ask them to be honest and confront the issue? The fact we already know the truth and have not pro-actively volunteered it alone could cause huge issues for the ongoing relationship. Are we then dishonest for not telling them the truth straight up? Are we virtuous in not being honest so we keep the family unit together for the sake of the children? Is watching a friend get misled, and minding our own business virtuous?

Let's look at loyalty, which is another virtuous trait. If we are loyal to somebody who is hurting someone else as we have a relationship or connection with that individual as opposed to the victim, are we a good person? Is this loyalty virtuous? The interaction between people is complex and does not fit neatly into labels of good and bad. If we look at the situation where we advise the person, they have bad breath the set up for honesty matters. If we are assisting them, as they have asked us for our opinion on their oral health, then our honesty will enable them to seek a remedy. If they were unaware of it and not securing employment as a result, again we could softly and kindly bring up the subject to ensure they can solve the issue and secure employment. If we simply believe honesty is virtuous and volunteer truths without invitation or positive intention, then the trait is being used for destructive purposes and ceases its virtuous value.

This is where emotional intelligence enters the framework. People with a high emotional intellect seem to progress further in their careers than people who are technically excellent. People's skills are infinitely scalable in the value they create but are not scalable through automation. Empowering others and gaining trust and respect is a powerful force and highly valued. Technical skills have limits, even though they can be just as desirable. If technical skills do not have limits, then they are scalable. If what you do is scalable, you are going to lose your job to a technology.

To improve emotional intelligence, we must understand words, meanings and how behaviours interplay. We must learn to see a spectrum of colours, not just the black and white. Combined with our discipline of base traits, we can improve. If we can learn to empower, learn to handle situational complexity, we greatly improve our chances of progressing to management.

Interpretation

Typically, language trails behaviour. Often, we don't sit down and use language to describe what we are going to do before we do it. Many times, what we do is impulsive, reactive, undetermined or is an abstract thought without applied language for its articulation. We act, reflect, and then describe. The choice of language used to describe actions taken presents an image, an understanding and judgement from the counterparty. The flaw with language is not with the words and structures themselves, but how varied and distorted the meanings become when interpreted by individuals. If we asked 100 people to define the meaning of a given word, we would no doubt get at least 50 variations of its meaning. Miscommunication is very common. When we give an instruction, description or follow an instruction, we can all stumble from a misinterpretation. Jigsaw spent many years refining the language of business and supply chain. As we built the business as an information supply chain company, having an aggregated understanding across the business of each word was critical to the business being able to offer the same customer value at scale. Taking the time to do this increased productivity, increased our brand power, and ensured each employee of Jigsaw understood what was being communicated when key words were spoken or written. We had no time for misinterpretation and wanted to keep it to a minimum.

To improve engagement, it often helps to avoid using acronyms or overly complex words. Acronyms and fancy words may help us project intelligence, but in the reality of day-to-day productivity and engagement, it can leave too much to interpretation or just intimidate the counterparty and then value is lost. Nobody likes to

look stupid, and many people feel too embarrassed to highlight they do not understand an abbreviation or word that is being used. Often, our acronyms are so customised to our employer or network, it is simply rude to put a counter party in a situation where they must spend time attempting to decipher what is being articulated. This especially holds true if we are selling complex solutions to complex problems. We may leave the counter party impressed with our intelligence and broad array of vocab, but if we do not secure the sale, engagement, or employment, we have targeted the wrong outcome. The simpler we can articulate what we are positioning, the greater chance we have of gaining traction with the counter party. As the saying goes, if you cannot explain something that a 10-year-old can understand, then you do not understand the subject matter well enough yourself. Simplicity takes more skill than complexity.

Meaning Equals Purpose

Previously we stated language typically trails behaviour. This is true for all of us, yet people who are successful also use language as a pre-determiner of future long-term behaviour. Although we all may do this from time to time, the language utilised by successful people typically has superior value and enables their desires. Research is applied for what each word utilised means, enabling a deeper sense of discipline and purpose. Mission Statements, Business Plans, Motivational Goals, it could be several words or sentences that drive the personal or professional agenda. The key point is these words, and their meanings help form a list of principles and frameworks to live by. Businesses have one, especially if they are to be successful and scalable, and interestingly it helps if people have them too. The deeper we understand the meaning of words the better we can apply the right words to our values and goals and get a greater understanding of ourselves. The greater we can label and articulate who we are and what we are about, the more confident and disciplined we can be. Understanding ourselves also ensures we can communicate our values and goals to others, improving their understanding of us and our ability to engage with them. This transfers to interviews, meetings, and stakeholder presentations etc.

The Equity of Language

Humans exist in a world of cost/benefit analysis. We do this instinctively as a component of our higher brain function to other species. It is an instinctive trait when selecting our social circles, employment, and investments, yet how many of us do this with language? Professional communicators (media, public relations, marketing, and politics) understand the power of words and phrases. Their success depends on the message presented to the masses to influence behaviour. Like most sections of this article, all of us understand these principles at a basic level, yet do we truly put the time into understanding what we say and how what we say can be improved, refined, and have more impact to our counter parties. In our recreational time these skills are far less important. As we have indicated, our friends and family are very forgiving of our communication limitations. They will sit with us and persist with our haphazard elongated narratives about what happened in our day etc. In a professional environment, where equity is non-existent and time precious, using the right words, phrases, and sentences to achieve an impact is critical. An interview is the perfect scenario to present as an example.

Interview criteria has an arc. The less experience and hence less achievements can be presented, the more chance the selection criteria is based on other areas of the communication spectrum such as physical, written and emotion. Culture fit overrides technical fit at the beginning of a career. As we progress, learn new skills, develop more business intelligence, and seek greater responsibility and remuneration, the interview criteria become broader. As we climb, we need to articulate our technical capability. Questions need to be understood so that answers presented have symmetry. Answers need to be precise, efficient, and informative. This means the choice of language used to articulate a situation or problem, a solution or outcome, are very important to our success. It is not what you know that secures you the next career opportunity, it is how you articulate what you know under pressure. So how do we optimise our ability to articulate our experience, skills, and achievements in such an environment? Like everything in life, with pre planning and research.

For the interview, it is the written resume that should sync to how you present re the use of language in the interview itself. If the written documents have had the correct planning, structure and display clearly and efficiently the key experience obtained, then the verbal presentation should flow in line with the documents. Taking the time to understand technical labels, so that they correctly match the physical tasks executed is key.



There is nothing worse than writing down a term in the resume, like strategy or change management, and when we must explain the achievement, we are not actually taking part in either of those labels. Measurement is also critical. There is no point moving because somebody told us to move. Move with purpose. Know what our inputs are to the department or wider business. Know the cost of the problem, the size of the opportunity and the metric of our contribution. Nothing is trivial, even if on the surface it seems to be.

It helps to address language like we would any other segment of our lives. In a cost/benefit structure. We can break language down into segments to help us do this. Words and even sentences can be broken down into Assets and Liabilities. If we can overall present a net asset (equity) position that is positive, we are heading in the right direction. We can also take it a step further. We previously touched on “Filling”, which is Jigsaw’s bespoke label for adding filler words when engaging counter parties. All of us have preferred phrases and engagement tics that go beyond just “Filling”. An example is the word “Sorry”.

How many of us use this word as a reactive act of communication, even when it is not applicable? If somebody runs into us in the street or office and we were standing completely still, how many of us default immediately to the phrase “I’m sorry”, even though the incident was not our fault. Yes, this is polite, in a British, Hugh Grant, Four Weddings and a Funeral kind of way, but the fact we are using a word that has no bearing on the real circumstance, is a liability. It is a habit that has consequences. If we default to a line of communication that is submissive or that is not in line with the physical situation we find ourselves in, it can cause more harm than good, especially if this trait is ingrained and repeated across multiple situations. The same applies for dominant communications, of which the word “Sorry” can also be applied.

Often, we can use this word to disarm a counter party. Somehow, we feel by entering an engagement with the word “sorry”, we are somehow creating an opportunity handed to us by a counter party to engage. We are attempting to empathise with them for an intrusion we have brought upon them. The truth is we are not sorry. In terms of logic, the question is, can we be sorry for an act we are intentionally committing and intend to keep committing to, should the counter party concede? What we are doing is using language to portray a misleading emotional state to the counter party to meet an objective we have planned, be it a sale or some other benefit. If what we are presenting holds any real value to the counter party, why are we sorry? We are offering value; we truly believe we can improve their lives. We don’t have to be sneaky and offer fake submission or empathy. This is deceitful at worst, naïve at best and to people who are initiated in the skills of communication, is counter intuitive. It says, I am deceitful and offer no value.

Let’s look at another example. How many times have we been in a queue and had somebody attempt to push in front of us because they have a smaller inventory? We are in the supermarket with a trolley full of goods. Out of nowhere, a bubbly personality just springs up in front of us, big smile, lots of eye contact. As they are pushing in physically in front of us, they communicate “Oh, I’m sorry! Can I just squeeze in here as I only have one item?” They are assuming the force of their physical gesturing, the dominance of the request and the overly emphasised, “I’m sorry” are going to enable them to exploit the situation for their selfish gain. The point is, they are not sorry. The word now has no meaning in relation to them as a person and the behaviour that is taking place. In their vocab, the word is suffering from inflation. Of course, most of us do not mind somebody with 1 item who is in a rush jumping the queue. The point is emotional communication would indicate it is for us to initiate this kind gesture. At the very least, the person seeking to engage us and jump the queue should not use the term “I’m sorry”. A simple “Do you mind” is much more appropriate and honest and it retains “Sorry’s” value.

If we breakdown language and have discipline with how we use our words, they can have tremendous power when calibrated to our person. Certain words should be used sparingly. We do not want to use them all the time. Like in anything that has value, the more of it there is, the less value it has. How often do we create an inflationary force with our own vocabulary and hence lose our power to influence?

The word “Sorry” should only be used for times when you are sincerely sorry. The word has the power to allow us to start again, to re-build, to heal and to appease. If we use it subconsciously as a “filler” to submissively engage or to passive aggressively exploit a situation, we are destroying both the value of the word as it is

attached to our person and hence destroying our credibility, influential power, and sincerity. Sorry is a word that surely can only transpire with honest reflection. Sorry can only label and describe a feeling synced to a past action that is now regretted. If we can use words in the appropriate context, if we can tighten/deflate their abundance in our vocabulary, then communication can be more impactful, more credible and connect as one with our behaviours.

There are many words like “Sorry” which we can dissect and learn to deflate in our usage, in turn increasing the value of our communication. None of us will have the time, or discipline to be perfect at utilising every word correctly in line with our actions and intentions. The point is, we can improve on where we are at today, and small improvements matter.

From admitting you don’t know something to offering a solution, words and sentences are the currency of our success. Like currencies, they can increase and decrease in value against other people’s currency. If we think of a world with 7 billion people in it, there are theoretically 7 billion currencies competing for space, time, and resources. We need to spend time increasing the value of our core currency to achieve our goals, not just throwing our currency into the world with abandon, inflating its uses and hence turning our currency into a liability, destroying its value. In Jigsaw, we believe this is certainly something to explore.

Conclusion

We hope from this article, at the very least, we have highlighted how complex and all-encompassing the topic of communication is and why it is so important to focus on, in addition to education, industry experience and technical skills. Communication is fundamental to our base character and adjusting our understanding of it can create dramatic changes in how we interact with the world around us, assisting us to achieve our ambitions. It is a skill set we can never perfect, yet it is a skill set with no end to how we can improve.

Most of us take a lot of care with our physical presentation. It is tangible. We buy nice watches, suits, pay for grooming, etc. What is often intangible and hard for us to reconcile is a rejection or limitation in our progress that is under the umbrella of communication, which can often be re-labelled as culture fit or worse, just a rejection with no reason. In the scenario of interviews, a wrong culture fit gives us nothing to work on, nothing to fine tune. It is just a rejection that seems almost offensive if we have made the effort to attend an interview. The good news is, if you have made it to interview, there is a good chance your written communication is sound, and it is aspects of your physical or verbal that requires fine tuning.

Jigsaw hope that whatever the reason for limiting a person’s success in relation to communication, we have at least covered some aspects of it. We will leave this month's report with a final send off. It was not written by us in Jigsaw, which will be evident from the quality of the writing. It is a segment out of a book called “The Wolf and the Philosopher” written by Mark Rowlands, and we just thought it was a great segment to describe the nature of us and the reason we often hold ourselves back.

Have a Great Xmas!

Humans are the animals that believe the stories they tell about themselves. Humans are credulous animals. In these dark times, it does not need emphasizing that the stories we tell about ourselves can be the biggest source of division between one human and another. From credulity, there is often but a short step to hostility.

In this sense, some humans are more apes than others. Indeed, some apes are more apes than others. The ‘ape’ is the tendency to understand the world in instrumental terms: the value of everything is a function of what it can do for the ape. The ape is the tendency to see life as a process of gauging probabilities and computing possibilities and using the results of these computations in its favour. It is the tendency to see the world as a collection of resources; things to be used for its purposes. The ape applies this principle to other apes and must as, or even more than, to the rest of the natural world. The ape is the tendency to have not friends, but allies. The ape does not see fellow apes; it watches them. And all the while it waits for the opportunity to take advantage. To be alive, for the ape, is to be waiting to strike. The ape has tendency to base relationships with others on a single principle, invariant and unyielding: what can you do for me, and how much will it cost me to get you to do it?



Inevitably, this understanding of other apes will turn back on itself, infecting and informing the apes view of itself. And so, it thinks of its happiness as something that can be measured, weighed, quantified, and calculated. It thinks of love in the same way. The ape is the tendency to think that the most important things in life are a matter of cost-benefit analysis.

This I should reiterate, is a metaphor that I use to describe the human tendency. We all know people like this. We meet them at work and at play; we have sat across conference tables and restaurant tables from them. But these people are just exaggerations of the basic human type. Most of us, I suspect, are more like it than we realize or would care to admit. But why do I describe this tendency as simian? Humans are not the only sort of apes that can suffer and enjoy the gamut of human emotions. Nevertheless, this tendency is simian in the sense that it is made possible by apes; more precisely, by certain apes and, as far as we know, no other animal.

The tendency to see the world in and those terms in cost-benefit terms; to think of one's life, and the important things that happen in it, as things that can be quantified and calculated; this tendency is possible only because we are apes. And of all the apes, this tendency receives its most complete expression in us. But there is also a part of our soul that existed long before we became apes – before this tendency could catch us in its grasp – and this is hidden, but it can be uncovered.

We are, all of us I think, more ape than wolf. In many of us, the wolf has been almost completely expunged from the narrative of our lives. But it is in our peril that we allow the wolf to die. In the end the ape's schemes will come to nothing; its cleverness will betray you and its simian luck will run out. Then you will find what is most important in life. And this is not what your schemes and cleverness and luck have bought you; it is what remains when they have deserted you. You are many things. But the most important you is not the one who schemes; it is the one who remains when the scheming fails. The most important you is not the one who delights in your cunning; it is what is left behind when the cunning leaves you for dead. The most important you is not the one who rides your luck; it is the you who remains when the luck has run out. In the end, the ape will always fail you. The most important questions you can ask yourself is: when this happens, who it is that will be left behind?

Sometimes it is necessary to let the wolf in us speak; to silence the incessant chattering of the ape.