



HOW LISTENERS THINK

(aka *How Customers Think* by Gerald Zaltman, HBS Press, 2003)

Zaltman insists that marketers who ignore the importance of the unconscious level doom themselves to old mistakes. His new paradigm for marketing is completely applicable to public speaking:

- **Thought is based on images, not words.** Neural images based on words or visual images make up thought, not discrete words.
- **Most communication is nonverbal.** As much as 80% of human communications involves gestures, body posture, eye contact and paralanguage – tone and manner of speech.
- **Metaphors and stories are central to thought.** Visual images are so prevalent that we are often unaware of them. They stimulate the mind, help us perceive the world around us, and allow us to surface unconscious feelings.
- **Emotion partners with reason.** Most marketers have a reason-centered bias in their research, but emotion should not be separated out.
- **Most thought, emotion and learning occurs with awareness.** Often people do not know they have knowledge until they synthesize it with other data to come up with information.
- **Socially shared mental models are important.** Mental models help to filter information and make it manageable. When groups of people share important features of mental models, they are called consensus maps (or shared stories, memories, rituals, opinions and feelings) and they are possibly the single most important set of insights a manager can have about consumers.
- **Memory is fragile.** Memory is actually a creative product of our encounters, beliefs, and plans developed on a subconscious level.