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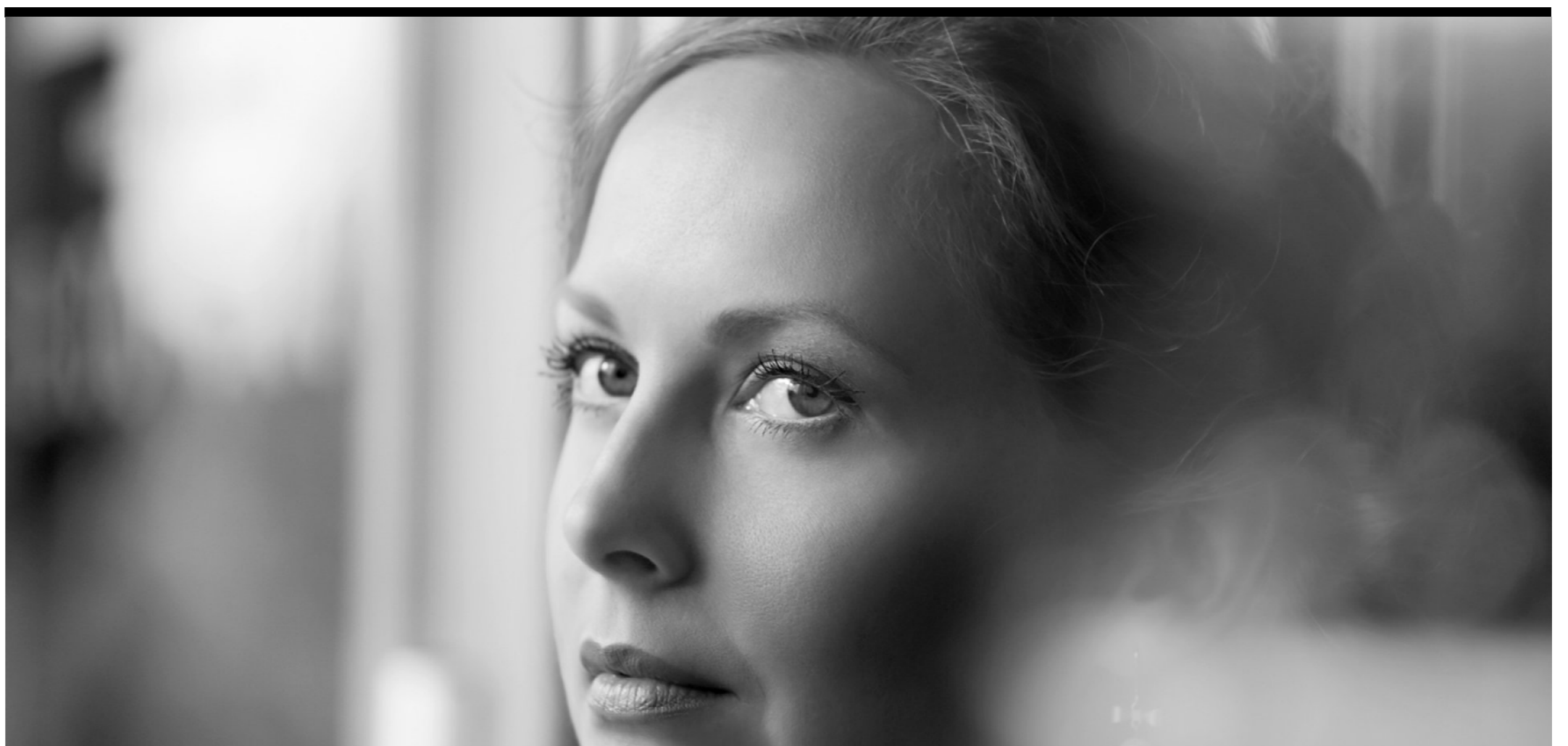


PUBLIC SPEAKING

10 Reasons Eye Contact Is Everything in Public Speaking

When you're in front of an audience, strategic eye contact has the power to change how people think of you. Here's why. [🔗](#)

BY SIMS WYETH, PRESIDENT, SIMS WYETH & CO. @SIMSWYETH




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● If there is one simple thing you can do to enhance your impact as a presenter, persuade others to see things as you see them, and make it more likely your audience will say yes to your idea, it is sustained, purposeful eye contact with one person at a time.

All it takes to start reaping the rewards of assertive eye contact is a little practice every day. Are you willing and able to give it a try?

You should be. In a study done last month in the journal *Environment and Behavior*, researchers at Cornell University manipulated the gaze of the cartoon rabbit on Trix cereal boxes and found that adult subjects were more likely to choose Trix over competing brands if the rabbit was looking at them rather than away.

"Making eye contact even with a character on a cereal box inspires powerful feelings of connection," said Brian Wansink, a professor at Cornell's Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management.

So, if you want to connect with your audience, look people in the eye, one at a time.

Here are 10 reasons why presenters should look at people, one at a time, when addressing an audience of any size.

1. Focusing your eyes helps you concentrate. When your eyes wander, they take in random, extraneous images that are sent to your brain, slowing it down.
2. When you fail to make eye contact with your listeners, you look less authoritative, less believable, and less confident.
3. When you don't look people in the eye, they are less likely to look at you. And when they stop looking at you, they start thinking about something other than what you're saying, and when that happens, they stop listening.
4. When you look someone in the eye, he or she is more likely to look at you, more likely to listen to you, and more likely to buy you and your message.
5. When you look a person in the eye, you communicate confidence and belief in your point of view. One of the most powerful means of communicating confidence and conviction is sustained, focused eye contact.
6. Sustained, focused eye contact makes you feel more confident and act more assertively. It may feel weird at first, but when you practice, it becomes a habit that gives you power.
7. When your listeners see your eyes scanning their faces, they feel invited to engage with you. They feel encouraged to signal to you how they feel about what you're saying—with nods, frowns, or skeptical raisings of their eyebrows.
8. As a result, your listeners are transformed from passive receivers to active participants. Your monologue takes the form of a dialogue, albeit one in which you speak words while they speak with gestures and facial expressions. Your speech or presentation is suddenly a conversation.
9. However, to have a successful dialogue with your audience, you must respond to what your listeners are signaling. So, for instance, when you see skepticism, you

might say, "I know it seems hard to believe, but I promise you, the investment makes sense. The data bears it out. "

10. Finally, when you look someone in the eye for three to five seconds, you will naturally slow down your speech, which will make you sound more presidential. In fact, you will find that you are able to pause, which is one practice that has helped President Obama become a powerful and effective orator.

Looking into the eyes of others may make you feel as if you are staring at them, but you are not doing any such thing. You are simultaneously being assertive and empathetic, because you are asserting your opinion and then watching their faces to understand their response.

With practice, you will master this important skill and turn it into a behavior that will serve you well in all areas of your life.

JUN 18, 2014

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STRATEGY

AOL Co-Founder Steve Case Predicts the Cities and Industries That Could Create the Next Silicon Valley

Now the CEO of venture capital firm Revolution, the tech pioneer shared his thoughts on the future of entrepreneurship at the Inc. 5000 Vision Conference. [🔗](#)

BY KEVIN J. RYAN, STAFF WRITER, INC. @WHERESEKR



Steve Case

Back in the 1990s, the area between San Jose and San Francisco wasn't all that different from the rest of the U.S. Now it's the country's undisputed tech capital.

So what city might stand a chance of becoming the next Silicon Valley? AOL co-founder and Revolution founder [Steve Case](#) says predicting that is like trying to choose a favorite

child—but he's willing to highlight a few candidates. Case, whose Rise of the Rest fund invests solely in companies outside of the VC-saturated states California, New York, and Massachusetts, gave his insights during a fireside chat at the [2020 Inc. 5000 Vision Conference](#), a weeklong virtual event celebrating this year's [Inc. 5000](#) list of America's fastest-growing private companies.

Case said cities like Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Pittsburgh are seeing startup success thanks to research institutions—the University of Michigan and Carnegie Mellon, respectively—that have been successful at retaining talent in recent years. "Before, people would go to those great universities and leave as part of that brain drain," he said. "Now more people graduating are staying, and some people are even returning."

Case pointed out that local policy will have a major impact on which cities attract startups in the coming years. The city and state governments in Indianapolis, for example, for years have focused less on trying to woo large firms or open new factories, and more on attracting entrepreneurs who could start the big companies of tomorrow.

Case cited cloud computing company ExactTarget to show how one startup could positively impact a city's ecosystem: The firm started up in Indianapolis, was acquired by Salesforce for \$2.5 billion in 2013, and has since added 1,000 employees to make it Salesforce's biggest office outside its San Francisco headquarters. ExactTarget co-founder Scott Dorsey has reinvested some of that capital into the local startup community, creating an accelerator, [High Alpha](#), that invests in and nurtures young companies.

Case also mentioned Seattle and Austin as two examples of cities with booming startup scenes. And Chicago and Denver, he said, are enjoying a lot of momentum when it comes to funding and rates of entrepreneurship.

The startup hubs of the future, though, will likely focus on industries different from what we've seen in Silicon Valley, Case added. While companies like Facebook developed largely freestanding apps that could simply be built on top of the existing internet, the next wave of startups will focus on large legacy industries like health care, food and agriculture, and education—or, as Case put it, "real world meets the internet." Those industries will be harder to crack because of regulation and will likely require advocating for policy changes and partnerships with existing firms.

"It's going to require a different mindset," Case said. "A different playbook."

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