

What does Hitchcock's «The Birds» tell us about communication?

Have you seen Hitchcock's blockbuster film about a bird attack on the coastal town of Bodega Bay, not far from San Francisco? As a film lover, I am always amazed at how well the film has aged. It's over 60 years old and still impresses. And this even though the special effects seem downright clumsy compared to what we are used to today.

Peter Näf

Why does the film still work? It has to do with its storytelling. The characters in the film are well drawn and reach us as they go through experiences that we all face in our lives: Fear of abandonment and loneliness as well as feelings of being at the mercy of others and powerlessness.

If there were a remake of the film - we wouldn't wish it - we could probably watch birds pecking at people in close-up using the latest technology. Whether the film would trigger the same unease remains to be seen. Hitchcock's genius did not show everything on the screen but brought the images in our heads to life.

Real people make up stories

And what does all this have to do with our communication? I have noticed that in various areas of communication, technology as a tool is in the foreground or rather in the way: presentations are based on beautifully designed slides, possibly with integrated film clips. CVs concentrate on the most appealing presentation possible and incorporate the latest technologies; in the past these were CDs or homepages, today they are video recordings. And what is often neglected? People

and their stories.

I remember two presentations on the subject of «Philosophy in working life». The first speaker gave a state-of-the-art PowerPoint presentation with countless quotes from well-known philosophers. His follow-up speaker stood in front of the audience without any aids. He shared his own experiences, thoughts, and emotions for 15 minutes: punchy, humorous, and personal. The audience went wild.

It's the story that counts - not the technology

It takes courage to be personal in your communication and not hide behind technology - but it's worth it. Whether in a presentation, job interview, CV, management communication or sales: it's always people like you and me who arouse interest with personal stories. And the best story is always yourself. Everyone can identify with your experiences because we all face similar challenges and experiences.

John Lasseter is considered one of the best storytellers and received an Academy Award in 1996 for the film «Toy Story». Pixar, for whom he worked, was and is a technical leader. He said: «We focus on the story and hide the technology. Because it's not the technology that entertains people, it's what you do with it (...) It's about connecting with the audience (...)» (Quote from the book «Tell me!» by Thomas Pyczak)

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