

# Soft skills for controllers

Jón Bergthorsson | Interact, Wrocław, 07.5.2026

**Interact**



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**  
Interreg

# Objectives of the training

## General objective

Provide you with a framework for communication that will be useful in your daily work.

## Specific Objective 1

Make you able to apply the framework when communicating technical information through text.

## Specific Objective 2

Make you able to apply the framework when presenting technical information to an audience.

# Agenda/ 7/5/2026

09:15 – 10:45

Communicating  
technical  
information  
through written  
text

10:45 – 11:15

Coffee break

11:15 – 12:45

Presenting technical  
information

# Danish traffic laws

"Right-of-way and yielding laws help traffic flow smoothly and safely. They are based on courtesy and common sense. Violation of these laws is a leading cause of traffic crashes. When two vehicles reach an intersection at the same time, and there is no traffic light or signal, the driver of the vehicle on the left must yield to the vehicle on the right.

When two vehicles reach an intersection at the same time, and all-way stop signs or flashing red traffic lights control the intersection, the driver on the left must yield right of way to the driver on the right."

# The rider and the elephant



The rider is... **conscious, controlled thought**.  
The elephant, in contrast, is everything else.  
The elephant includes the **gut feelings, visceral reactions, emotions** and **intuitions** that  
comprise much of the automatic system.

Jonathan Haidt – *The Happiness Hypothesis*

# Rider / Elephant

## Rider

Logic/rationality

Long-term thinking

Long-term memory

Self-conscious

Restrains

## Elephant

Emotions

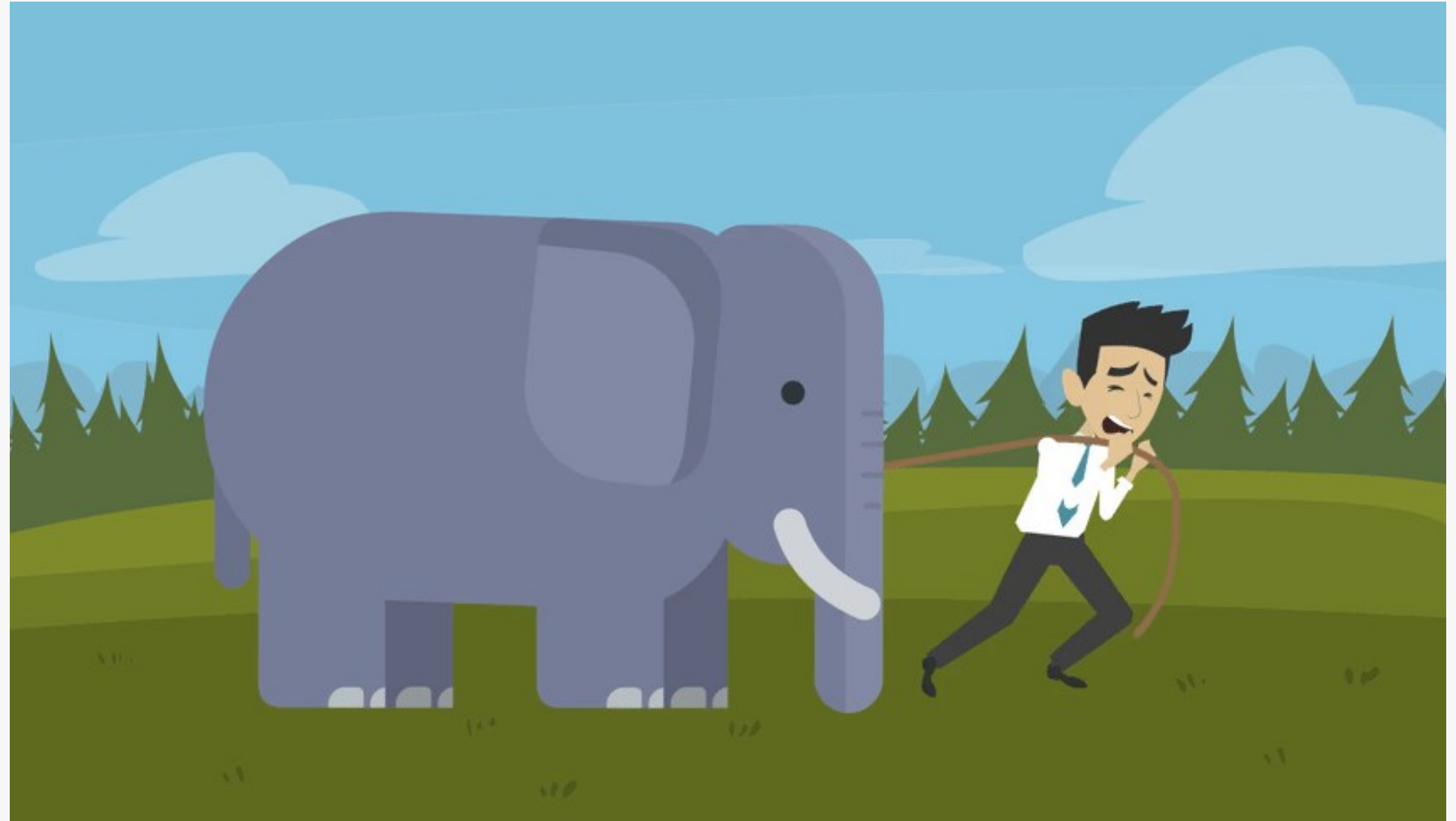
Short-term thinking

Working memory

Socially conscious

Wants

# The elephant is much stronger than the rider



It costs energy to drag an **elephant** where it doesn't want to go.



# Telling **them** isn't enough.

Activity	Immediate consequence	Delayed consequence
Smoking	Nice nicotine hit	Lung cancer
Saving for retirement	Less money	More money
Exercise	Ouch	Nice abs!
Doughnuts	Mmm...	I'm not getting on that scale...

# Attention is a **resource**



**If the elephant is willing,  
everything is easier**



# What do **elephants** like?

## What

**Social status  
and approval**

**Comfort and  
ease**

**Fun**

**Immediacy**

**Practicality**

## Why

**Reputation and social standing  
are matters of life and death.**

**Famine is always just around the  
corner, so preserve as much  
energy as you can.**

**Life could end at any moment, so  
enjoy yourself while you can.**

**If it's not immediately useful,  
then it's useless.**

**It just needs to work, it doesn't  
matter why.**

## What it means for you

**Never humiliate.  
Make them feel respected.**

**Break things down.  
Simplify.**

**Bring humour.**

**Get to the point.  
Concise.**

**Clear instructions.  
Cut the fluff.**

# Exercise: paper art

 10 min

Follow the instructions:

Place the rectangular sheet in portrait orientation. Fold the two superior lateral corners diagonally inward so that their upper edges meet along the central vertical axis. Reinforce the resulting oblique creases. Then fold the newly formed outer diagonal edges inward again toward the same central axis, maintaining bilateral symmetry. Rotate the structure 180 degrees and fold the lower horizontal margin upward by approximately one tenth of the total sheet length. Compress all existing folds firmly and adjust the lateral planes to create a stable form.

# What do **elephants** like?

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# How much you know vs. How much **they** know



# Making technical information useful: Chunking

Mix together the flour and the salt.  
Chill the butter and water.  
Add the butter to the flour and cut it with a pastry blender  
Add water until the dough barely hangs together.  
Cut the dough in half and make two balls.  
Peel and cut the apples into 4 slices.  
Mix the apples with sugar, lemon juice, cinnamon and small amount of flour.  
Fold pie dough with apple mixture.  
Place dough on the top of the pie.  
Cut steam holes in the top crust.  
Bake the pie for 45 minutes at 350 degrees.

## **Prepare the dough:**

Mix together the flour and the salt.  
Chill the butter and water.  
Add the butter to the flour and cut it with a pastry blender  
Add water until the dough barely hangs together.  
Cut the dough in half and make two balls.

## **Prepare the filling:**

Peel and cut the apples into 4 slices.  
Mix the apples with sugar, lemon juice, cinnamon and small amount of flour.

## **Assemble the pie:**

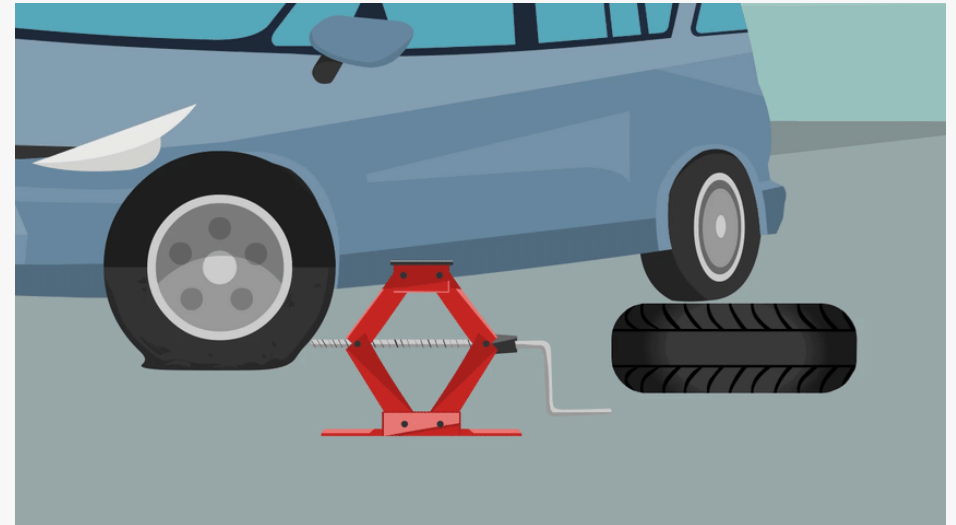
Fold pie dough with apple mixture.  
Place dough on the top of the pie.

## **Bake the pie:**

Cut steam holes in the top crust.  
Bake the pie for 45 minutes at 350 degrees.

# Making technical information useful: context

First, you will need to provide support above the usual level. If you do not have a device for this elevation, you will need to obtain one. Before you provide the elevation support, you will want to decrease the later resistance for all the critical contact points. After the elevation device has been utilised, you can complete the rotation of the critical contact points, and exchange the impacted element. You will then want to re-engage the critical contact points and remove the device. You may continue to use the replacement element. If it is not adequate for long-term use, you may want to repair or replace the original element, at which point you will need to repeat the process.



# Making technical information useful: Plain language

In the event of the emergence of a process in which substances combine chemically with oxygen from the air and typically give out bright light, heat and smoke – you are respectfully requested to remove your person from this establishments by means of this door, which will allow you to distance yourself from harm, death or other such unpleasantries.

**FIRE EXIT**

# Making technical information useful: BLUF

**B – Bottom**

**L – Line**

**U – Up**

**F - Front**

We've been working on the quarterly report where we compare last quarter's actual performance against our projections and we found a discrepancy. We have adjusted accordingly, but we need your approval to finalise the report.

**We need your approval to finalise the quarterly report.**

During our work, we found a discrepancy between last quarter's actual performance and our projections. We have adjusted accordingly but we cannot finalise it until you approve it.

# Exercise: **paper plane** instructions

In groups, think about how the changes you could make to these instructions to make them more "elephant-friendly".

Write on post-it notes your suggestions.

Be prepared to share your suggestions to the larger group.

 30 min





The two words **information** and **communication** are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite **different things**.

Sydney Harris



The two words **information** and **communication** are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite **different things**.

Information is **giving out**; communication is **getting through**.

Sydney Harris

# Presenting technical information: knowing = doing?

True or false:

- If you teach people about how smoking is bad for them, they will stop smoking
- If someone reads a management book, that person will be a good manager
- If you teach someone the right way of doing things, they won't do it the wrong way

# Presenting technical information: What's the **goal**?

If you don't know where you are going, how are you going to get there?



# Be aware of the experience filter

Everyone filters information through their past experiences.

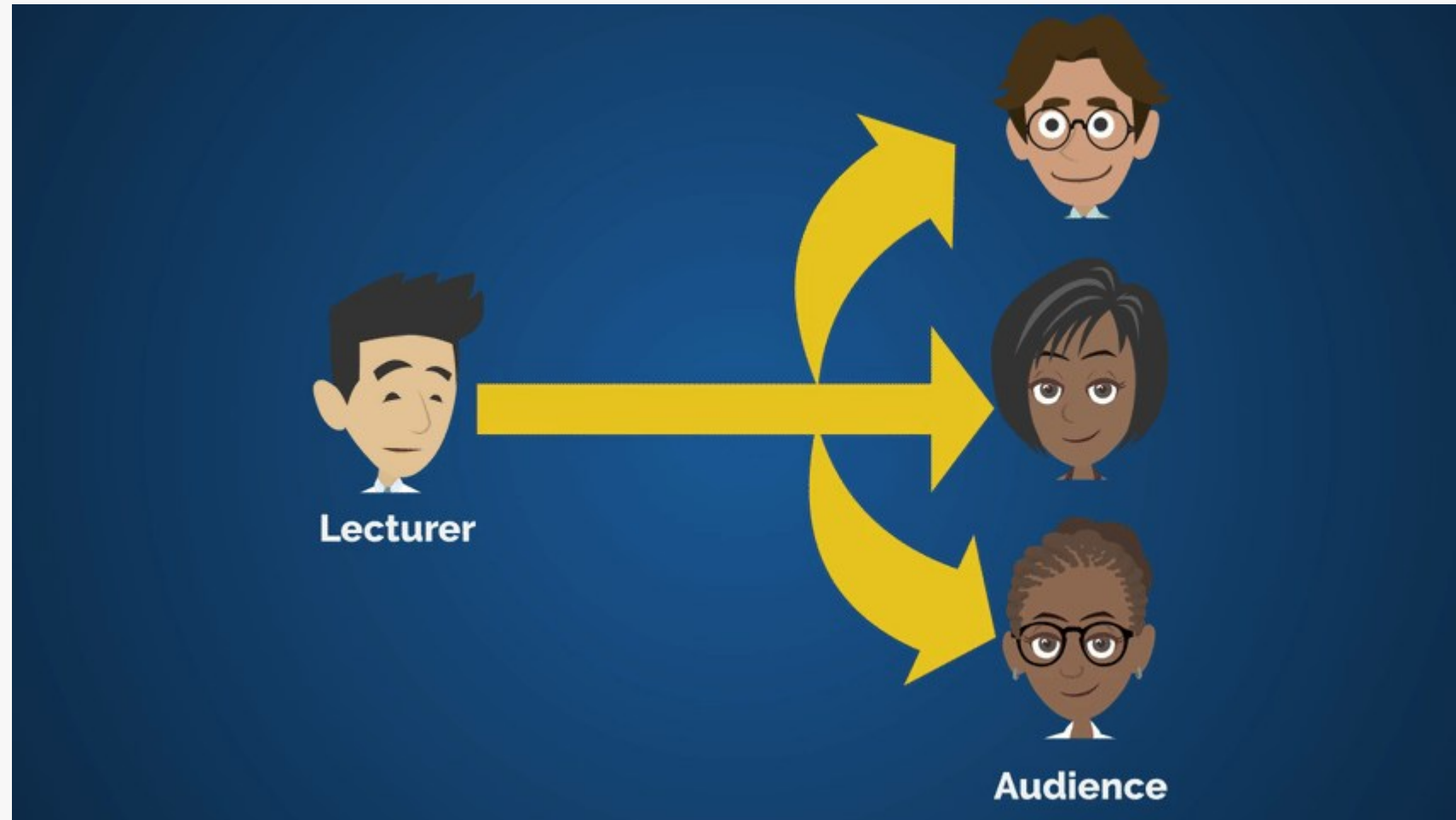
Especially in multi-national context.



# Information flow: Traditional **lecture**

We cannot read minds...

When is the best time to correct misunderstandings?



# Information flow: Interactive

Construct opportunities to see how your audience are interpreting and applying what you are telling them.



# Information overload

Attention is a finite resource.

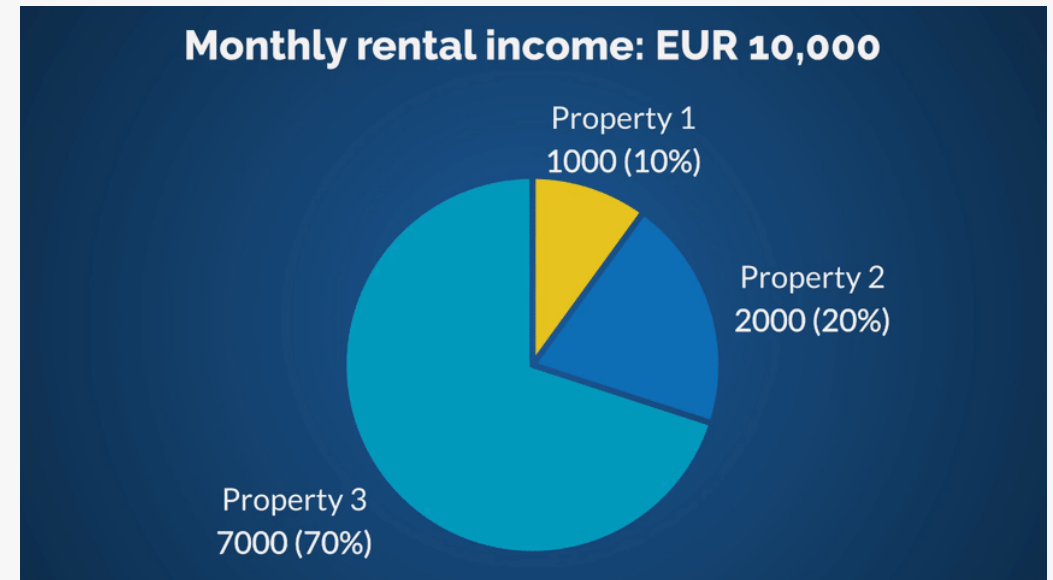
People cannot multi-task.

Keep text on your slides to a minimum.

One thing at a time.



# Presenting technical information: Use **visuals**



# Presenting technical information: Tell a **story**



# Danish traffic laws

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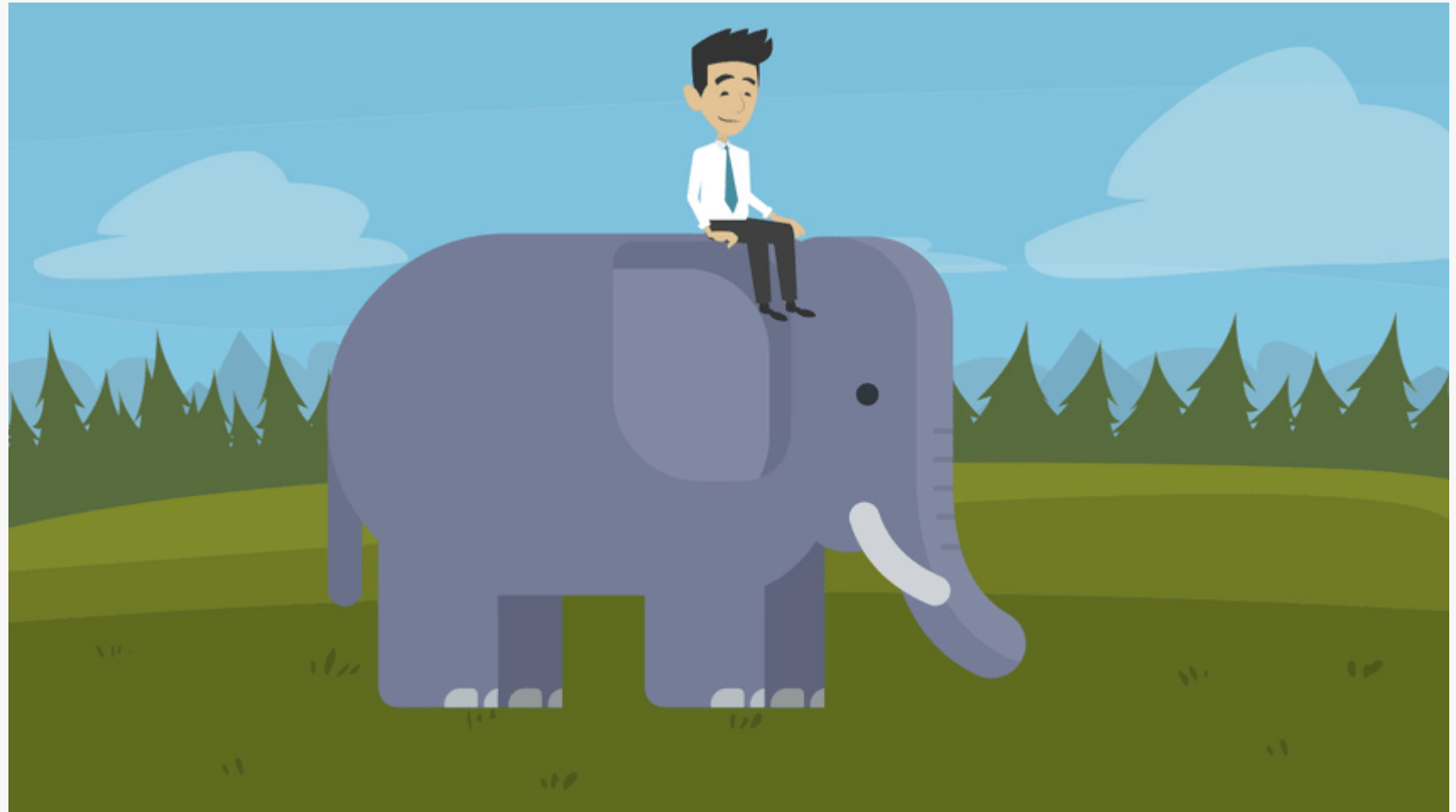
# Presenting technical information: Work through **problems**



# Presenting technical information: Have them **apply it**



# Presenting technical information: Use a **metaphor** or **analogy**



# What are your **takeaways**?

## Individual reflection:

Write (silently):

- At least one thing I learned about how people receive technical information.
- At least one thing I want to do differently in my own communication with project beneficiaries.

## Group discussion:

- Share your thoughts with each other.
- Write down your findings on post-its

## Plenary:

- Each group to share one thing they will do differently in their communication to beneficiaries going forward.



# Cooperation works

All materials will be available on:  
[Interact.eu/Library](https://Interact.eu/Library)

Want to discuss it? Join our MS Teams environment!  
[Portal.Interact.eu](https://Portal.Interact.eu) | Programme and Project Management

Interact



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# Disclaimer

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Primary knowledge area

Soft skills

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