Using Heart Rate Variability to Analyze Stress in Conversation
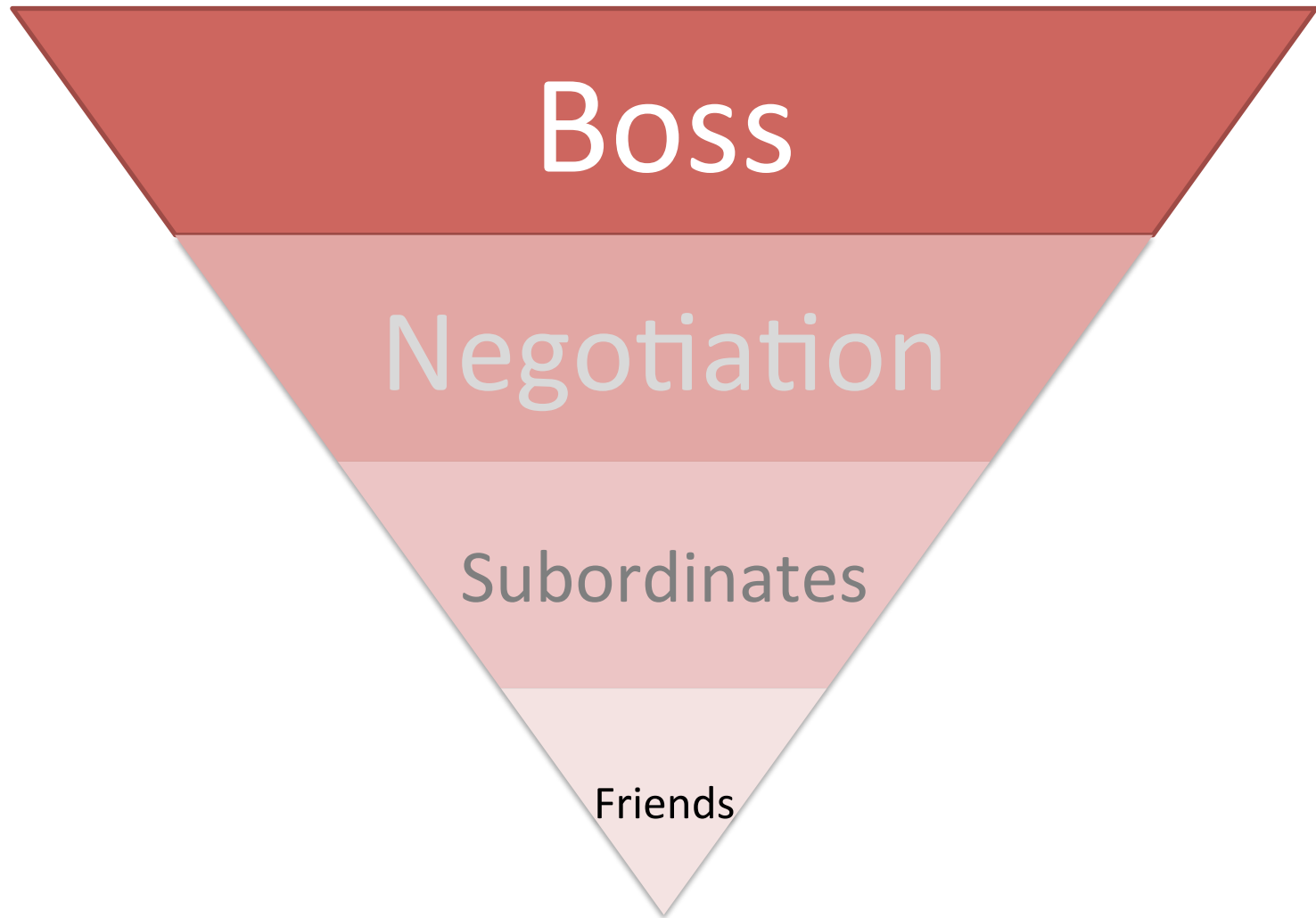
Paul LaFontaine

Vapor Lock

Maybe Difficult Conversation?

Boss

Negotiation

Subordinates

Friends

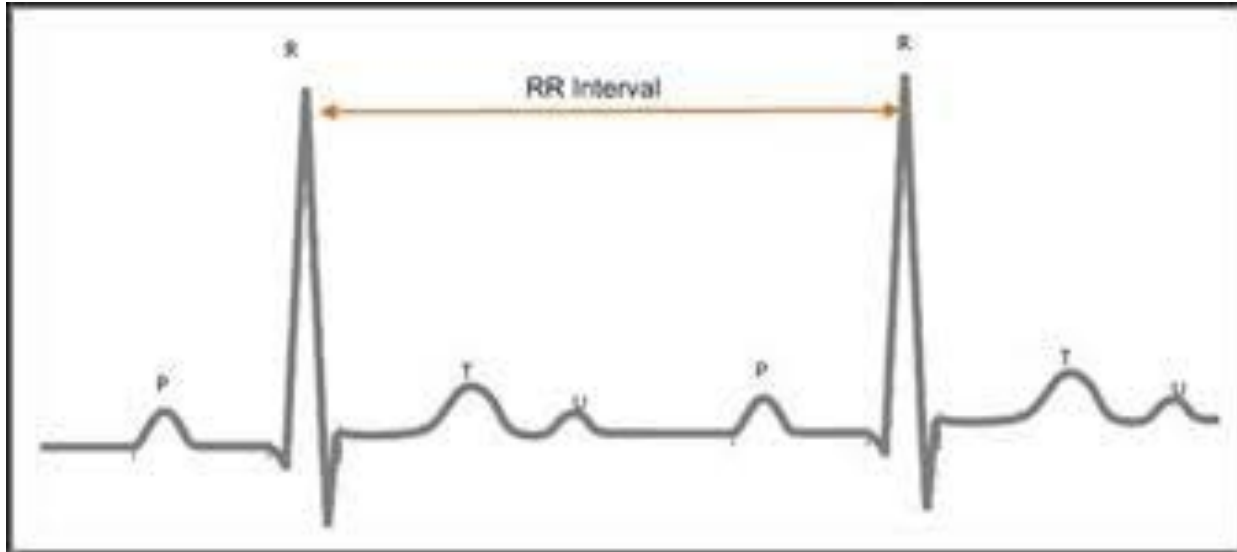# Get Better at Avoiding Vapor Lock

What did I do?

Measured my heart rate variability when in conversations with work colleagues

Heart Rate Variability (HRV)

Heart beat intervals vary

Difficult Subjects as Threats

No Threat
"RELAX.."

HIGH HRV

Brain Engaged

Threat
"RUN!"

Low HRV

Vapor Lock

LOW HRV VAPOR LOCK

With whom, and when?
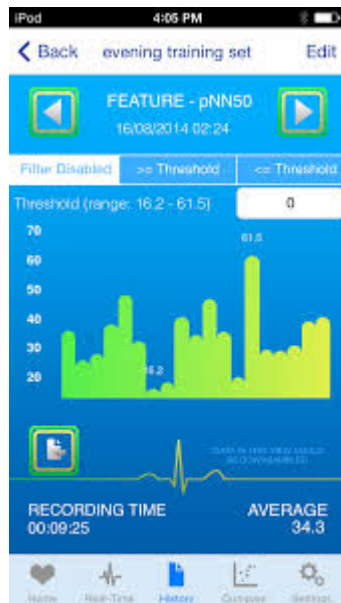
How did I do it?

Wore off the shelf wearables, took reading during meeting, export data to excel

Measured

154 Conversations

- 27 reporting to Bosses
- 87 with Colleagues
- 4 as Interviewer
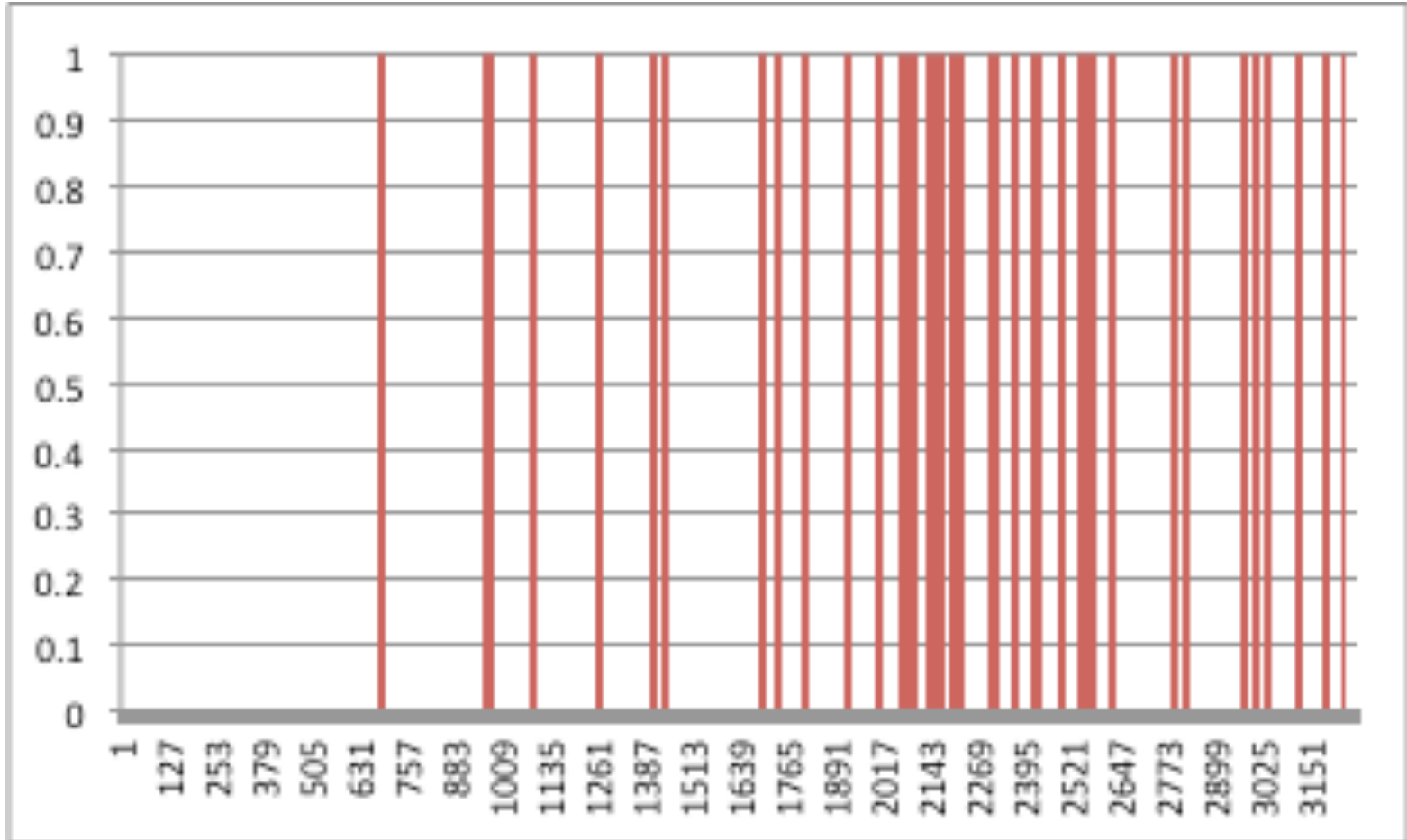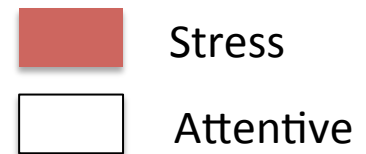- 11 Public Speaking
- 25 Staff meetings

Conditions For Vapor Lock

- For more than 9 consecutive heart beats,
- Interval between successive beats is under 17 ms

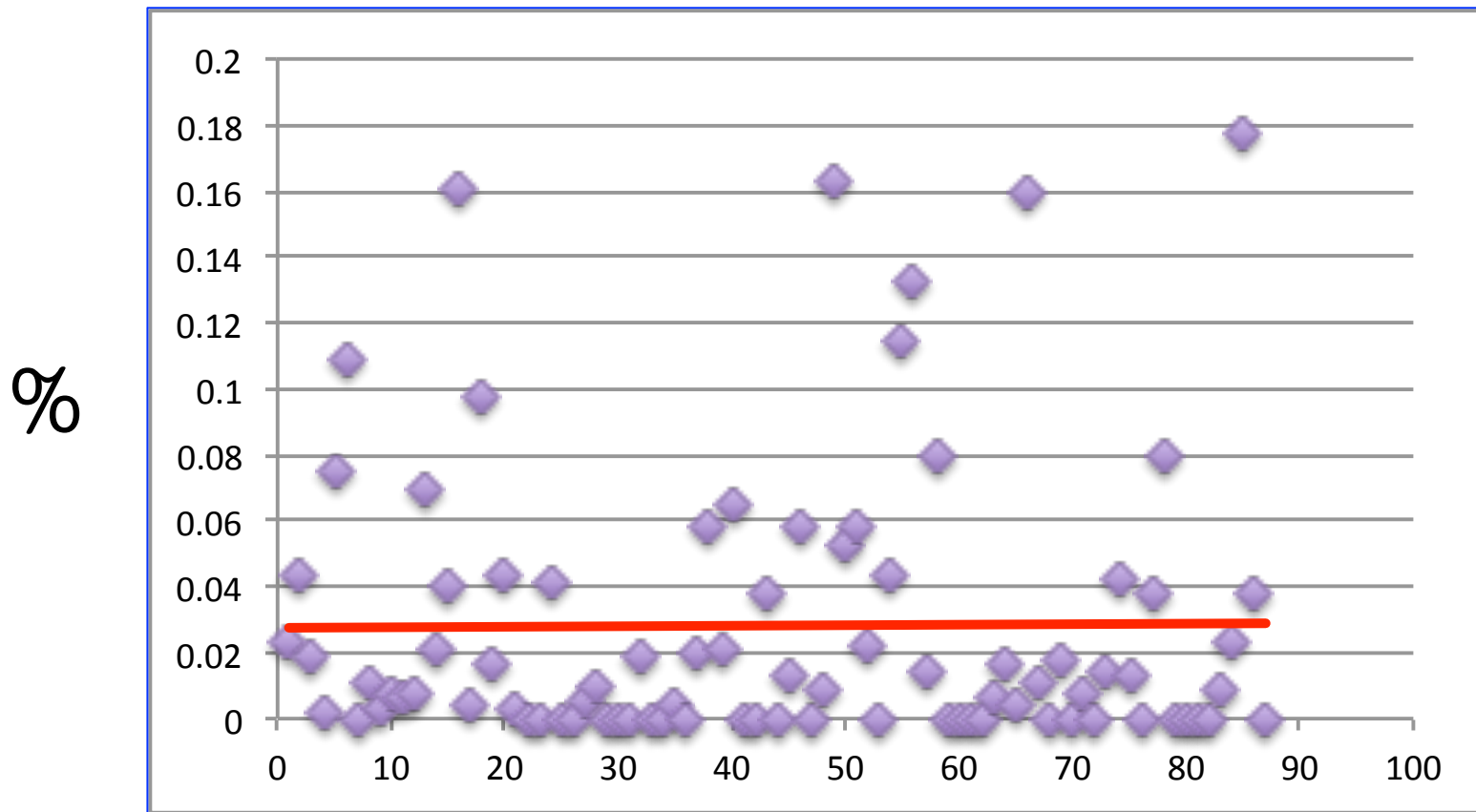# Percent of Time in Vapor Lock

13.3% in Vapor Lock
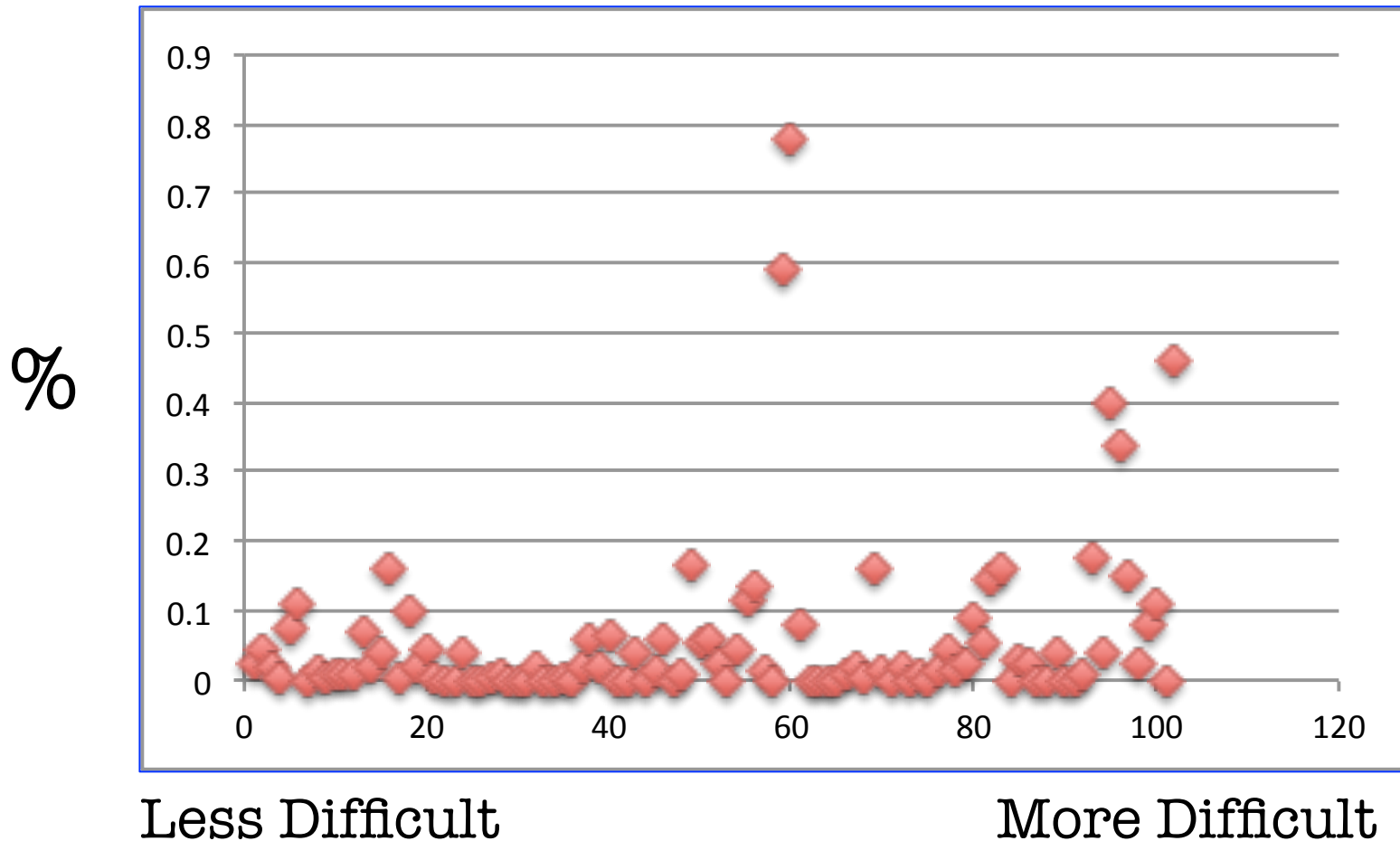
Stress

Attentive

What did I learn?

Difficult conversations are not consistent creators of Vapor Lock.

Did Not Get Better With Practice

%

Legend:
- ◆ % of Time in Vapor Lock
- — Trend Line

Not Correlated with Difficulty

%

Less Difficult

More Difficult

R = .17 No Relationship

Number of People in the Room

Vapor Lock

Brain Engaged

Number of People – The Data

# People	Avg % Stress
1	3%
2	11%
3	16%
8	46%
18	59%
85	78%

R = .73 Very Strong Relationship

New Ninja Strategy...

Stick to a few points

OK for difficult subjects

Conclusions

- Cannot avoid Vapor Lock when there are a large number of people

- Controversial or thoughtful topics are best in 1 on 1 conversations

- Next study: How does the time of day impact the ability to cope with difficult conversations

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