

## **Presenting – How to use your voice to maximum effect**

in case you were thinking of just getting on with it, here are three really good reasons why you should think carefully about your voice and how to make full use of it:-

1. Audiences are more inclined to listen to an interesting voice, hence the use of actors in voiceovers. And they will stop listening if they struggle with the audibility of a presenter.
2. Just as with visual stimulation, auditory stimulation has a huge influence, much of it subconscious, on how an audience responds to the speaker and interprets the meaning in the message.
3. Public speaking is a physical pastime just like sport. The more you do it the better you should be. The more coaching and practice you have the better you will definitely be....and with greater power and stamina. And if you fail to warm up first you may well strain yourself!

### **Coaching your voice**

- Sing in the shower. Give your lungs and larynx a good work out it will also add power to your voice.
- Practice your scales. Go through each of the vowels moving up and down to retain comfortable use at high and low levels. Humming will get you to feel your comfortable vocal range
- Read out loud. Children’s story books are great to practice dramatised delivery of words and comfortable regulated breathing.

### **Posture**

- Correct posture will result in a relaxed upper body which will mean better breathing and better voice power. It is that simple.
- Stand upright and straight with shoulders back and chin gently lifted.
- Centre yourself and turn from the hips 45% left and right.
- Practice lifting and rolling the shoulders to relax them.
- Imagine you are balancing a book on top of your head
- Tilt the head up it helps relax the jaw
- Relax yourself physically, loosen the jaw to relax the throat, and release the tension from your shoulders and neck and improve resonance.

### **Breathing Control**

- Good breathing creates resonance which creates vocal power. Trying to squeeze power from the throat or unnaturally lowering the voice in a growl will strain your voice.
- Practice breathing evenly from the diaphragm and not the chest. It frees up the chest to add sound capacity and resonance. And it gives greater stamina.
- As a breathing stamina exercise, inhale counting to 5, hold and exhale counting to 5, and repeat increasing the count up to 10
- Practice speaking within your vocal range and diaphragm capacity to develop a powerful voice not a strained voice that is forced from the throat. When you speak, leave something in reserve on the out-breath.

### **Nurturing your voice**

- The dreaded “gruffness” is nearly always due to digestive mucous in the tubes caused by eating too late or food that is too rich. So avoid both.
- Avoid coffee and chocolate, these dehydrate you.
- Lubricate your throat. Warm water with lemon is highly recommended.
- If you need to clear your throat cough quietly rather than “slap” the vocal chords

#### **Projecting your voice**

- Enunciate. Open your mouth and project the words. Speak as if you want to be lip read.
- Smile as you speak!
- Aim your voice to the last row in the audience. Keep your chin up.

#### **Emphasise through Pace**

- Maintain attention and emphasise meaning by increasing pace when talking about up beat, new, exciting things.
- Encourage the audience to agree and to accept your point by increasing pace.
- Slow down when emphasising seriousness, concerns, or when asking the audience to think hard about something

#### **Emphasise through Pitch and Modulation.**

- Add interest and meaning with high pitch to emphasise excitement, surprise, belief in what you are saying.
- Use low pitch to emphasise seriousness and concern, and when you are being reflective.
- Move from low and high pitch to stress changes in mood and lead audience thinking.
- End questions on a high pitch and statements on a low pitch.
- Use silence to dramatically emphasise the point just made. To compel the audience to reflect and consider. To indicate a change in direction in a presentation. To take a sip of water!

**All of these tips will add power and impact to your presentation delivery. Practice them regularly so that they become natural habits and the more powerfully persuasive you will be.**

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