

## **Presenting – The Power of Persuasive Language**

As you talk to an audience you communicate with them at different levels of consciousness. At their most conscious they listen to what you are saying and consider your meaning. But each word triggers an instinctive search of their mind for established meaning and of their beliefs system for emotional reaction.

At a lower level of consciousness the audience is less investigative. They bypass the beliefs system check. They are more open to suggestion.

And there is also a level of unconsciousness where some words are not even heard but subconsciously trigger thought as if it was self-prompted.

These are the reasons why correct language is so critical and why persuasive language is so potentially powerful.

**Positive words:** Eliminate words and phrase that can intuitively signal doubt such as “will try” and “perhaps” and “do not worry.” Always use positive and assumptive phrases like “we shall” and “when we.” Reframe negative words into positive alternatives such as problems into opportunities, and mistakes into expected teething problems.

**Metaphors:** Illustrate and dramatize your meaning with the visual impression of metaphors such as “an explosion of ideas” and “results instantly rocketed.” Metaphors create images and stories which lead audience thinking away from the beliefs check and into a more open-minded state. Use exaggeration and humour to further embed meaning with phrases like “he moved like a rat up a drain.”

**Quotations:** Use famous quotations to reinforce your message, to add credibility and to provide a powerful metaphor. By quoting Churchill, JFK or Ali you suggest association and endorsement with the speaker.

**Power of three:** First attributed to ancient Greeks and used in Tony Blair’s “Education, Education, Education” manifesto speech, a repetition of three is proven and accepted as a persuasion device. Use it to embed acceptance of your key message.

**Presuppositions:** Highly positive statements that assume truth or acceptance of what you say. “No business ever succeeded without making changes.” These sound as if they must be true and subconsciously suggest acceptance. Use them with convincing words like “it is clear that we must” or “it is undeniably true that” or “we are certain to discover that.”

**Truisms and Equivalents:** Here you make a statement of fact and then equate it to a second statement suggesting that this is also true. “Training is a valued and beneficial investment in your people.....and further training will undoubtedly raise morale and reduce turnover.”

**Cause and Effect:** Similar to Truisms and Equivalent, but with less logical or proven connection between the two statements, use these in the same way as presuppositions. It is the intuitive meaning to the listener of the link words like because and therefore that makes these so powerful. “Fashion brands have always responded to celebrity endorsement because of this we know that price is not an issue!”

**Yes sets:** Here again the language suggests acceptance and agreement. You ask for agreement to your critical question by preceding it with two questions where yes is certain to be the response. “Clearly a solid client base is important to us.....?” “And retaining the profitable clients is important...?” “Which means investing in those key client relationships must be a priority....yes?”

**Generalisations:** Here you make generalised statements such as: “People always find...!” “Customers happily follow trends...!” “Experience will teach us...” By avoiding detail your audience will find less to disagree with. They can also add detail from their own experience and more easily relate to what you say.

**Vagueness:** This technique cleverly allows your audience to think about something without your obvious lead. It will suggest that the conclusion they come to is theirs and not yours. “I am not sure if this applies to you?” “Maybe this is something to consider?” “You will probably be able to clarify this in your own mind better than I explain it!”

**Pacing and Leading:** This extremely powerful technique shifts thought by linking the possibility of the future with the certain reality of what is here and now. “Here is the thing!” is a simple but powerful phrase that gets the audience feeling connected with reality. “Standing here with you today” is often heard spoken by great speechmakers to anchor audiences into reality. Then by using phrases like “as we go forward and begin to appreciate,” or “as your understanding increases in the coming weeks” you suggest that acceptance will happen but use language that is difficult to dismiss here and now.

Practice using persuasive language so that you can use it elegantly and not conspicuously in your presentations. Remember the more naturally you use it and the less obvious it appears to the audience the more powerfully it will work.

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