

## **Planning to Present 9 – Use of Persuasive Language**

Our persuasive presentation has been planned and key messages, examples, anecdotes, and the odd persuasion technique have been programmed into a compelling presentation structure. The final element in the planning stage before we commit the presentation to print is to think about persuasive language.

Why is language so important? Apart from the obvious need to convey our intended meaning to the conscious mind of our listener, our language is also working at a subconscious level. For all of us, words and phrases have an intuitive meaning “hardwired” into the brain from initial learning. We instinctively and subconsciously apply that meaning, influencing our perceptions, interpretation, and acceptance of ideas. Here are a series of ways in which we can add powerful persuasion into presentation language:

**Positive words:** Phrases like the following intuitively strike a negative note: “I’ll try! ...Don’t worry! ... Can’t do! ...Yes, but! ...if we proceed?” Always use positive phrases like “We shall.... When we....” Reframe negatives into positives, convert “problems” into “opportunities” and “mistakes” into “initial attempts.”

**Metaphors:** Create dramatic impressions and images with words like: “An explosion of ideas!” “Results rocketed!” “Suggestions rained in!” Use exaggeration and humour to embed meaning with phrases like: “he moved like a rat up a drain!” “We should boot these ideas over the grandstand not into touch!”

**Presuppositions:** Highly positive statements, they assume truth or acceptance and they subtly induce agreement. They use “convincer” words like: “...is clearly the way...! It is undeniably true that...! We are certain to discover that....!

**Truisms and Equivalents:** Here we present a truism or accepted statement and link that acceptance to our “equivalent” statement: “Training is a welcomed investment in your people.....so further training will raise morale and reduce turnover.”

**Cause and Effect:** Similar to Truisms and Equivalent, but with less logical or proven connection between the two statements; these are a used in the same way as presuppositions. It is the intuitive meaning to the listener of the link words – “because,” “which means,” and “therefore” that makes these so effective. “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 creates a mind set of acceptance and agreement by phrasing the critical question for agreement immediately after phrasing two certain “yes” questions: “Clearly a solid client base is important, to us... yes?” “And retaining the profitable clients is important...yes?” “So investing in those key client relationships should be a priority....yes?”

**Generalisations:** By being unspecific we lessen what there is to disagree with and allow the listener to relate the generalisation to their own experience and to agree with that. “People always find...! Customers happily follow trends...! “Experience will teach us...”

**Vagueness:** This cleverly encourages people to think about issues and consider certain action when their thinking may not have been heading that way: “I’m 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:** This takes vagueness out of the present and into the future, subtly encouraging the listener to suspend doubt and consider what they may not yet have felt: “There are a series of things you’ll come to appreciate about this.” “I am wondering how you would see yourself in this role”

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