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Presentations

TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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Are you singing your speech or just mouthing the words?

Did you ever consider that delivering an outstanding presentation is like performing a great song? Not only is the "music" delightful to listen to, but your voice soars on a combination of dynamic technique and an inspirational message. The way you use your vocal tools carries astonishing weight with regard to credibility, authority and that all-important attribute, believability.

Why does your voice alone make such a difference? Well, for one thing, we all respond in basic, even primitive ways to the qualities of a person's voice. If a voice is pleasant and authoritative, for instance, it may inspire confidence in the listener. But if it comes across as unpleasant, weak or too quiet, the speaker will have difficulty persuading the audience toward a sale or any other positive response.

Vocal dynamics are some of the most powerful tools presenters can use to win an audience. Tone quality, pitch, inflection, emphasis, variety in pace, pauses and all the emotional nuances our voices can project offer a nearly limitless palette to "paint" our "word pictures" and convince others. When we do that, we're making our story, whatever it may be, come vibrantly alive for the listeners.

The potential of your voice

An effective way to reach toward your full vocal potential is simply to remember that the voice is inherently physical. That may sound obvious, but it's easy to become so focused on our presentation's content that we forget this essential fact.

Our voices are intimately connected to breathing, energy and relaxation. Any relaxation exercises — yoga, meditation or simply lying down to rest — will help free your voice from the tension that comes from a busy life. Distractions in life naturally take their toll on how we express ourselves. Although it's not always noticeable, the tension in your daily life reflects not only in your body but in your voice. Your voice functions most fluidly and powerfully when you relieve these daily tensions.

Getting the flow

To be convincing, you must combine the use of your voice with what you are saying. Beautiful words that don't sound meaningful will not convince people. The converse is true as well: Meaningful words presented without eloquence can also come across as insincere. Content's power and effectiveness hinges on your ability to combine the quality of your voice and your nonverbal communication. When you look and sound good and offer the audience a message worth listening to, all the components will be in place.

If you truly believe in your message, the way you move and your voice quality will make that message come through loud and clear. You will not have to *try* to be persuasive — you will *be* persuasive. At that point, the presentation will have a natural flow and persuasion will occur naturally among audience members.

Delivering honesty

When you're aware of the potential of vocal power, you can learn how to use the subtleties in your voice to influence your audience. The suppleness of our vocal instruments is a factor presenters too often neglect. The voice is the perfect tool to build trust, instill confidence in a product or service or create excitement among potential clients or investors.

The key to this power is practice. When you've practiced enough to smoothly use your vocal tools in your presentations, remember a last point: Your listeners must trust and respect you, which means you must have an honest conversation with your audience.

Also, make sure to keep good eye contact with the audience members at all times. Look your listeners in the eyes and use your voice to persuade them of your cause. Remember to pay attention to your nonverbal cues and the subtleties of your voice. Convince your listeners by respecting their intelligence and listening to their opinions. Do that, and you'll have standing room only for your next "performance." P