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**Advanced Communication Techniques:  
Power of Voice**

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# Power of Your Voice

## It's not what you say, it's what they think you mean.

In his pioneering studies at the University of California, Los Angeles in the 1970s, Professor Albert Mehrabian developed a communication model that launched a new field of study into the importance of non-verbal communication and body language in face to face communication, including presentations.

His study indicated that vocal delivery or how you say it accounts for as much as 38% of the meaning of the communication.



**Verbal** → 7% of meaning is in the words that are spoken

**Vocal** → 38% of meaning is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said)

**Visual** → 55% of meaning is physiology (facial expression and body language)

## Your Vocal Dashboard

So what can you do with your voice when delivering your presentation? Let's practice and see what difference it can make!



- Tone** of your voice (pitch)
- Tempo** of your voice (speed)
- Timbre** of your voice (quality)
- Volume** of your voice (loudness)
- MUTE** (the sound of silence)

**MOTIVATED PRESENTER** 

# The Basics of Vocal Delivery

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Your voice is responsibility for at least 38% of the communication in a face-to-face communication; perhaps even more if you are on the telephone or other venues with limited ability to see each other's body language. Therefore, you should consider your voice a major tool in your presentation tool bag. It is something you must learn to use better and to leverage to its fullest advantage.

Here are some basic tips for using your voice more effectively in presentations:

- ❑ **Slow down** by at least 20% when you present versus your normal speed of conversational speak. Even when time is limited, you and your audience will be much better served if you take your time to speak your message with impact.
- ❑ **Pacing.** It's not a horserace. You don't have to bolt the entire way through the presentation to cross the finish line first. Learn to pace your talk so that you and the audience are comfortable, energized and engaged from beginning to end.
- ❑ **Pausing** in-between thoughts creates emphasis. It gives your audience a chance to absorb your ideas before moving on. You can even pause in the middle of a sentence for effect.
- ❑ **Vocal variation.** Don't be a monotone speaker. Raise and lower the pitch of your voice and the volume. You have control over all of these knobs. Part of being "interesting to listen to" is what you do with your voice, not just the content of your presentation.
- ❑ **The importance of breathing.** In order to deliver an effective message, you, your brain and your body require that you get sufficient oxygen. Proper breathing is essential. If you find yourself getting nervous and your breathing becomes shallow and in your upper chest, this is the signal that you need to slow down and focus on breathing. It takes just a few seconds to re-center yourself. Your audience will wait for you.
- ❑ **Avoid rambling** and eliminate "ums" and "ahs" from your speech. The simple trick is just to stop. Stop talking. Breathe. Enjoy the silence. Be purposeful and make a conscious decision to stop the flow of words. Breathe. Think. Then speak. Over time, you'll find less need for the vocal soothing distracters called "um's" and "ah's"

"Compared with the act of writing, speaking is a more direct, instinctive, intuitive, spontaneous form of communication. (The better) our rate of delivery, volume, rhythm, inflection, mood and passion - the more pronounced and engaging our style."

- Steve Wilbers, author of "Keys To Great Writing"  
*Communication in Business and in Life*

# Advanced Vocal Delivery Techniques

- **Personification through voice.** You can use your voice to re-enact a situation, a different character, an alternate persona. This can be a fun way for your audience to “see” two sides of the issue. Author and business guru, Tom Peters has mastered this technique. When he wants to demonstrate “old school thinking,” he will raise his voice to screaming levels, talk really fast and quickly pace about the room. When he delivers his antidote (i.e., the new way of thinking and leading), he slows down, lowers his voice and communicates his new ideas. This entertaining vocal delivery creates a safe environment for his audience to laugh at themselves while also seeing the error in our current ways.
- **Direct the path of your voice.** Vocal Awareness expert Arthur Samuel Joseph recommends that we create an arc of sound with our voices, allowing the energy to soar up through the arc and allowing an emotional releasing down through the body. Imagine an Olympic ski jumper jetting down the long ski jump, picking up speed and then soaring through the air, landing smoothly and safely to a crowd wild with applause. Now, imagine doing that with your voice. Project your voice in this same arc motion.
- **Speak through, not at.** If you wanted to break a board with your fist or foot without hurting yourself, you must plan to go through the target, not stop at it. (Believe me, stopping at the board creates tremendous pain!) Likewise with your voice, you want to imagine projecting your voice through the audience, not stopping it in front of them. This is the only way that you will effectively project your voice to the back of the room, so that everyone can hear you.
- **Warming up your voice.** Like any kind of sports or serious performance, you need to warm up before you play. That goes for your voice as well. A few basic vocal exercises will prepare you to deliver a compelling message.
- **The truth about clearing your throat.** Not only does this make you look nervous, clearing your throat actually can damage your voice and cause hoarseness. Instead try increasing your fluids (have a glass of water nearby), swallowing the problem, or sucking on a throat lozenge *before* the presentation (not during the presentation – absolutely nothing in your mouth but words and ideas). Above all, remember to be gentle with your vocal anatomy.

**“When I speak, I need to be aware of projecting my voice in a very specific arc.**

**It doesn’t matter whether it’s loud or soft. The energy is constant, even though the volume may change.”**

- Arthur Samuel Joseph,  
*Voice of a Leader: Vocal Awareness to Empower Your Communication in Business and in Life*

# More Advanced Vocal Delivery Techniques

## Low and Slow

If you want to have your suggestions followed and build your credibility, you should pay careful attention to how you end your sentences. Your voice inflection will communicate whether you are asking, stating a fact or commanding someone to do something. There will be times during your presentation when you'll want to use all three of these voice inflection techniques. But first you must be aware of their power and what they mean to your audience.

Lowering the pitch of your voice (within your natural range) has other added benefits. It has the effect of slowing you down, thereby encouraging the more precise articulation of each word. It also tends to minimize any nasal vocal quality, which many listeners find annoying.

Statement:    Word → Word → Word

*(all words spoken with same emphasis)*

Question:    **Word → Word ↗ Word**

*(last word ends on a higher pitch note)*

Command:    Word → Word ↘ **Word**

*(last word spoken with lower tone of authority)*

**Partner Exercise:** Say a sentence from your presentation key message three different voice inflections. Do it in a random order and see if your partner can guess which vocal inflection you are using.

As a statement \_\_\_\_\_

As a question \_\_\_\_\_

As a command \_\_\_\_\_

**Q: Is this an area that you need to continue to work on?** \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, ask a colleague or friend to help “catch you in the act” of ending your sentences on a high pitch tone. This will help you become more aware of your vocal patterns and give you an opportunity to modify them.

**“Avoid ending declarative sentences in a rising note. This is a verbal bad habit more common to women than men. It makes a statement sound tentative, even doubtful, as if the speaker were continually seeking approval.”**

- Jack Griffith, author of *How to Say It® at Work* (page 526)