



consulting®

# speakeup

## Contents

---

### KEEP AN EYE ON PACE

Following on from the article in our last edition about getting the emphasis and intonation of your message right, Alastair Grant identifies the two other crucial areas of pace and eye contact and explains why they are so important.

### BULLFIGHTER – FREE JARGON BUSTER

Deloitte's bullfighter creation has certainly done well as a marketing tool. But does it actually work and how useful is it? Alastair Grant has tested out this piece of software and here explains its pros and cons and most importantly gives some tips on how to avoid the bull in the first place!

### CAVEAT ORATOR!

Gerald Ratner did it, Henry Paulson did it, and I am sure there are many others who've done it too. Will you join them? Beware the pitfalls of ad-libbing!!!! Humble pie is not the tastiest of desserts. However, Ewan Pearson explains some valuable tips on how to ad-lib skilfully and therefore avoid indigestion!

### THE TELEPHONE - DISTRACTION OR POWERFUL WEAPON?

The telephone is probably the most significant universal tool for business. But is often undervalued and therefore not used to its full advantage. James McBrien highlights the crucial elements of telephone conversation.

## Keep an eye **ON PACE!**

**In our last edition Michael Ashby covered expression and intonation. The premise is easy enough – we the listener can pick up conviction and emotion by the sound of the speaker's voice. In delivery terms does anything else matter? What could ruin perfect expression?**

The answer is that expression alone however "good" is not the only area to excel. We identify two other key areas:

- Pace
- Eye Contact

**Pace** is often misunderstood. Often we hear people say I speak too fast! What they might mean is that they rush headlong from one point to another. But the listener needs time to digest each idea. Speaking fast shows vitality and zest but punctuated with pauses

allow the listener to keep up.

**Eye Contact.** Most of us realise the need to have eye contact with the audience but in practice we tend to allow our eyes to fall away at the end of ideas or phrases as the brain grapples to secure the next idea. Lots of eye contact but the wrong sort! In reality the best sort of eye contact comes at the end of the idea or phrase as we seek to engage the listener. If it is just one other person they will invariably help by nodding and making some sort of audible response to show they have heard you. Suitably encouraged you can then plunge on. This simple mechanism works in all cultures but as soon as there are a number of listeners then this instinctive reaction between speaker and listener largely stops. Yet the need to engage doesn't go away.

*Alastair Grant*





# BULLFIGHTER... Jargon Buster For Free

If you have just been on holiday you may have missed Deloitte's clever marketing gift of a CD or web download. Bullfighter is a piece of software designed to spot jargon words thus giving you a chance to become bull free. The Telegraph applied it to speeches by Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Franz Fischler. Blair did best but Fischlers speech caused the computer to crash. The FT also reviewed it.

This software is like a spell checker, which is programmed to pick up words or expressions like *best of breed* or *seamlessly leverages*. The latter invites the following comment from Bullfighter.

***Hyperbole like this won't help your Bull Index score. And... no one buys it anyway. Drop the hyperbole and back away from the document slowly.***

And we tried it out on Bill Clinton's Dimpleby lecture in 2001 and a Churchill speech from 1940. They both came through with praise for easy to understand language. Clinton is taken to task for using the word *global* instead of world and Churchill for the word *strategic*.

The trouble is, as Lucy Kellaway says in the FT, "The less ostentatious the jargon, the more pernicious it is".

Our advice about jargon falls under two distinct headings: Words and clarity. First of all the actual words themselves. This is what we call language hierarchy. We divide language into five categories on a descending scale: Formal, semi formal, normal, colloquial and slang. We might call a motor car "a ground transportation system" or we could call it "wheels" You could "initiate" a project or you could "start" a project. We prefer the more straight-forward Anglo Saxon approach to Latinate multi-syllabled words. Alastair Cook in "Letter From America" made the point well with two contrasting phrases produced by British and American generals in WW II

"The order was given but not much was done about it."

"The directive was mandated but subsequently was ineffectively executed"

He says that the Brits prefer the shorter words whereas Americans go for the Latin based ones. The words in the Bullfighter dictionary seem largely American in origin. (Do you think we are right? Comments are welcome!)

But, more importantly, you need to look at the imagery that sentences produce. You could use a word like "*strategic*" which is castigated by Bullfighter but could be fine in the right context. "We have to provide a standard of service better than the customer expects" will not register as bad with Bullfighter yet such a statement, oft made, really means little unless there is a pungent example that we can see in our heads.

Clarity. One aspect is abstraction. You must bring Daisy The Cow into play. She last appeared in our Autumn 2001 edition. In case you weren't on our list then, Daisy sits at the bottom of a Ladder of Abstraction. In ascending levels we have Daisy/Cows/Livestock/Farm Assets/and finally Wealth Creation Unit. We think that general expressions like "wealth creation unit" or "superior customer service" may be OK provided they are tagged to good examples. (The ladder of Abstraction was thought up in 1965 by Professor S I Hayakawa)

Daisy provides good verbal imagery or you could try a PowerPoint picture/ graphic which enables the listener to understand and visualise the abstract concept.

We had some challenges with a client some years ago who was persuading their people about the merits of empowerment. We had challenges... Bullfighter would have a field day, (or maybe a fiesta grande), with their handouts; but the real issue was to get the management to illustrate, with vivid examples, what empowerment would actually do. To our surprise we found that many could not give any examples at all. This is really quite dangerous territory, for if management want to bring about change but can't articulate what it is to themselves then one wonders if they are on the right track.

**By the way I have submitted this article to Bullfighter and it says "You generally use standard words to explain concepts. Most concepts will be clear and understood. Keep clean." The words it picks as baddies are the ones in italics – which came from them in the first place. All my bullish examples escaped!**

***Alastair Grant***



# Caveat ORATOR!

**Ad-libbing is speaking without prompts. The dictionaries call it 'at leisure, to any extent'. It occurs in informal small-group presentations, at parties, especially after too much alcohol (!) It applies most in answering questions. We ad-lib all the time. It can be pre-prepared or made up as you go, and it's the most risky of all presenting styles. It can easily go very wrong, mostly in terms of saying something you didn't plan to say. Ask the Gerald Ratner if in doubt!**

We get asked if this is the supreme presenting style. We don't think so, as you're taking some huge risks. You can spend considerable time 'learning your lines', and yet run the risks of risky omissions, additions and incorrect sequencing. Using notes is acceptable, saves on the learning time, and removes these risks. Scripts are even better at minimising risk.

We hear of so many examples of ad-libbing gone wrong. Here is a highly embarrassing one: Henry Paulson, CEO of Goldman Sachs had to eat much humble pie after an interview at this year's results. In answering a question he said: "At the risk of sounding heartless, there are 15-20% of the people that add 80% of the value". He has apologised, sending a voicemail to all 20,000 staff putting into context and apologising for his "glib and insensitive" (his words) comments that had suggested many of the bank's staff were expendable. He also said: "I am profoundly embarrassed and particularly unhappy about my choice of words. My quick response has created an impression that is completely at odds with my appreciation and respect for the people who have been let go". Thanks for that, Henry. Even top guys get it wrong occasionally.

So why ad-lib? Usually because there was no time to prepare (e.g. in question handling) or you want to appear at your most spontaneous. Therein lies the danger! So for these applications, here are some of our valuable tips on getting this ad-libbing right:

## Creating good ad-lib talks

- Keep to a few simple ideas at most
- Often the best ideas are from personal experience
- Prepare by learning these ideas in order, especially the start
- Think of interesting examples and anecdotes
- Think of a neat place and point on which to end.

## Speaking well when ad-libbing

- Do not start until you and your audience are ready
- Stick to your plan. Avoid extra unplanned ideas
- Think before you speak, then talk smoothly through the point
- Don't worry about exact words. Big ideas count, so be relaxed about the odd wrong word
- Make a point strongly at the end, preferably with eye contact – see Alastair's article
- Use conversational not formal business language
- Use your planned examples and analogies to bring content to life
- Find a place to stop neatly, and then stop. Don't hurry on to the next point.

Sometimes ad-libbing is obligatory. A colleague recently coached a group who each had to speak for precisely 19 minutes without prompts, just PowerPoint slides; a tough task especially as success would mean promotion. In rehearsals some found it incredibly hard to stop at the right point. They had masses of knowledge and rambled too much. Here's an extract of our 'Anti Rambler' advice:

- Avoid add-ons such as 'and' and 'um' that trap you into saying more
- End with a strong emphatic statement, denoting finality – even go down in tone; avoid ending with an uplift in tone – it denotes uncertainty or a question
- Start with eyes down and finish up - it is easier to engage the audience (the down-up technique). So, look towards the audience and not to 'Mother' (the screen)
- Memory pegs. For example, picture ideas you want to remember on bits of furniture in your house. We all have a solid idea of what our house looks like room by room. The trick is to make unusual or even ridiculous associations. Imagine an oscilloscope sitting in an armchair!

**Ewan Pearson**



## GPB Consulting: Our Services

GPB Consulting is a respected adviser. We enhance the performance of businesses, helping clients to excel in the use of the spoken word, improving the performance of individuals and teams. Over the longer term our work improves the way a firm does business.

We coach and advise individuals to perform at their best in the toughest situations including: Presentations, New Business Pitches, Business Development, Negotiating, Media Interviews and Telephone calls.

Our clients' needs are the only focus of our work; we listen to them and closely tailor our response to deliver first class coaching and advice. Through our own innovative culture we selectively pursue new ideas and approaches, continually hone our advice and create tools such as Voice Analysis, Prospect Relationship Management (PRM) and the GPB Virtual Classroom.

### Open Course

This course is a good opportunity for individuals who need coaching and would benefit from being in a group with people outside their organisation.

### Advanced Presentation Skills (through Capita Learning & Development)

This senior level workshop is designed to help participants improve their style and method of presentation. This is a two-day course followed by an on-line 'Virtual Refresher'.

**2003: Sept 18-19, Oct 21-22,  
Nov 20-21**

**2004: Feb 10-11, Apr 29-30,  
June 7-8**

Please call us on **020 7831 1000** for further information or to book someone on a course.

# The Telephone - DISTRACTION OR POWERFUL WEAPON?

The telephone is probably the most significant universal tool for business. It allows for immediate transfer of information to decision makers, yet how many of us really know the subtle nuances of how to use it effectively or have had any formal coaching? Most of us, I suspect, have just picked up a few tips by trial and error and from watching what others do. In terms of richness of information transfer it is actually the next best thing to talking face-to-face, so how we use it merits more attention.

### Making calls

Most business activities involve making a lot of phone calls. How you perform this relatively simple task will determine the quality and success of business relationships. Here are a few tips to raise your game:

- Speak in a calm, measured and confident manner
- Listen very carefully and give audible signals of empathy if listening for a while
- Allow time for the other person to think about what you say
- If it is a call covering a number of points write them down in advance to use as a prompt
- With mobiles you don't know where people are or what they are doing so ask "Are you able to talk now?" early on in the call.

### Receiving calls

Incoming calls are the essence of the business world. The individual who answers the calls on behalf of the business has a key role in that business's success or failure. You do not always know who will be calling so your approach to handling incoming calls should be as if it is the next biggest order coming in.

- Answer the phone within 4 rings
- Give a short greeting confirming the name of the company
- Speak in a clear, helpful and pleasant tone
- Under-promise but over-deliver ie if you say you will look into it and get back to them in half an hour, call them in twenty minutes.

### Finally, get the emotions right!

Psychologists refer to the phenomenon called 'Emotional Contagion'. This refers to the way in which emotions are copied and hence spread, much like a contagious disease. This happens face-to-face but is most pronounced when on the phone as you are limited to one sense and you form an opinion (good, bad or indifferent) of the other person based purely on how they sound.

If you come over as negative, bored or lacking in energy then this is exactly what is projected onto the other person and you are likely to meet nothing but resistance and hostility. If however you are positive, enthusiastic and create a positive mood you will be amazed at how people become more open, understanding and creative at finding solutions. It is also very important to smile while you are talking, as this changes the sound of your voice. Standing up can also make you sound more confident and authoritative. This was reported in the FT recently with Bloomberg encouraging their staff to stand up when making calls to raise levels of confidence in the voice.

### TREAT YOUR VOICE AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR MAKING MUSIC...

*What music are you playing?*

*James McBrien*



GPB Consulting  
37 Great Queen Street  
London WC2B 5AA  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7831 1000  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7831 1010  
Email: [gpb@gpbuk.com](mailto:gpb@gpbuk.com)  
Website: [www.gpbuk.com](http://www.gpbuk.com)

