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speakeup

Contents

THE “FBI” PUSHES OUR HOT & COLD BUTTONS. SO WHAT?

Are your benefits hitting Cold or Hot Buttons? Alastair Grant explains how to use the “So What?” test to work through the FBI (no, not American law enforcement!) to miss the Cold and hit those Hot Buttons that win the business!

THE SUM OF THE PARTS

Safety in numbers is not always the case when presenting, as more often than not, the sum of the parts is not greater than the whole. Ewan Pearson explained what to do to avoid the pitfalls when presenting as a team.

FINE TUNE YOUR VOICE

A good voice has the power to motivate, inspire, persuade and lead. An average voice would have the potential to do this but is let down by physical attributes such as poor pitch modulation or fluency. These stop a voice being truly powerful. James McBrien looks into these two common problems and gives some tips to improve them.

The “FBI” pushes our Hot & Cold Buttons... **SO WHAT?**

“FBI” is an instantly recognisable acronym. To most people it means American law enforcement. To us at GPB it thankfully means something altogether different!

FBI here at GPB stands for *“Features, Benefits, and Implications”*. Many of us learnt somewhere when trying to win business that you should describe your product or service more in terms of the benefits to the buyer rather than as a list of features. For example, a 5-seater Ford Mondeo has 6 airbags. That’s our Feature but what is the Benefit to a buyer? “Safety?” I hear you say. Yes, that’s the general benefit but the answer would be better defined as *“...Better protection for the driver and all passengers, including back seat, and from any direction, not just a head-on collision.”* Wordy maybe, but it’s less abstract and

more honest. So what’s the Implication? It’s that ultimately the 6 airbags should enable all occupants to live longer and/or continue their lifestyle without permanent disability. Implications get to the ultimate and much more big picture point.

We find that many clients find it really difficult to do FBI on their own businesses. We have an elegantly simple but very tough (hey we said we’d be your devil’s advocate!) tool to help you, the *“So What?”* test. Let’s do it on a pitch we hear a lot: *“Our firm is truly global”*. That’s a feature not a benefit, although the ‘truly’ is a good attempt to suggest competitors aren’t - a differentiator. In addition, a client could easily feel less significant to this big fish.

Continued on page 2

Sotto voce: GPB Consulting celebrates its 10th Birthday on 7th November 2003





The “FBI” pushes our Hot & Cold Buttons... **SO WHAT?**

Continued from page 1

An improvement comes from asking: “So What?” You might then add “...this would make us ideal partners to your business as we have offices where you do.” This is better but it is still a feature! Better still to state a relevant benefit: “...which means that you will benefit from our valuable local knowledge and so avoid mistakes”. But you can go further still if you think of Implications: “so what that will ultimately do is save you lots of time, money, and particularly hassle”. One more thing – use vivid examples to bring these issues persuasively to life and prevent the problems of abstract language.

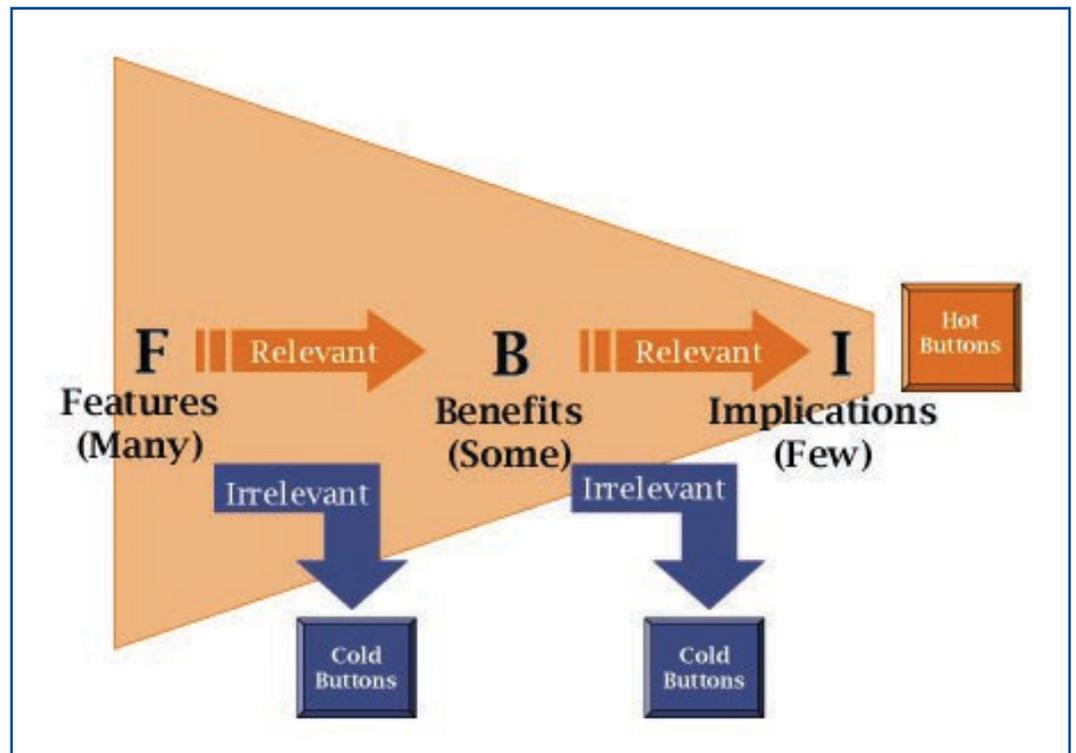
That’s FBI, but what are these Hot and Cold Buttons? You hit a Hot Button when you say something particularly interesting and/or persuasive; you may even get a ‘wow’! Hot Buttons are rare, yet can be key moments in a meeting or conversation. Whilst you may get one from a feature, they’re more likely from benefits and implications. You hit a Cold Button whenever you say or do something that puts the client off; something unappealing, irritating or annoying. They turn out to be much more important

than Hot Buttons. Let’s suppose our car buyer is a sales rep, who typically drives alone. For them the rear air bags are irrelevant. Promoting rear airbags and their benefits has actually put the buyer off and hit a Cold Button.

It is no use producing a feature and its benefit if the buyer doesn’t find them relevant and attractive. Thus, when putting together your pitch, you have to put together only those features that each buyer will find appealing, and then state (don’t make them guess) the benefits.

All this sounds like common sense and it is. But our experience is that clients are so close to their subject that they find it difficult to focus on benefits and implications. They can’t see the answer from their clients’ point of view. Our advice when preparing is to make a statement and then test it on others with “So What?” Decide whether what you are saying is really a benefit and not just another feature. Will everything you say avoid the Cold and hit those Hot Buttons?

Alastair Grant



THE SUM of the parts

There are many presentations where several speakers from an organisation each deliver a part of a presentation – such as pitches for professional services, analyst and investor results presentations, and floatations (IPOs). In such situations ‘The sum of the parts should be greater than the whole’. Sadly in our experience the opposite is true: One US Investment Bank – who (to spare blushes) shall remain nameless – turned up to pitch as advisers to a very large IPO. They brought 16 people. Of these 11 sat around the walls of the room. 5 sat at the Board table and delivered the presentation, answered all the questions, then the whole ‘team’ left. They came last. In another presentation, the team leader doodled continuously (once he’d said his piece) right across the table from the client’s Chairman. They lost too. These may seem one offs; they’re not. We hear of anecdotes weekly, and what is sad is that the perpetrators are usually fully grown, very intelligent, highly-paid people. In case any of you have to do a team presentation, here is a collection of tips that will help you avoid the more common mistakes; Leave your rivals to make them! The issues vary considerably for pitches so let us know if you would like more information on a specific aspect.

Balance

Each member of a presenting team must be seen by the audience to contribute significantly to the presentation and/or any question & answer session. A good guide is that in teams of two each does at least a third, for teams of three each does a quarter, and so on. Each person must have a key role so sharing out the persuasion. Beware of the risk of Q&A ‘dominance’ with one person answering the bulk of the questions.

Team Leader

Each team must have a ‘leader’, usually the most senior person. That person leads the presentation (often by topping/tailing) and receives the undirected questions, handling some and delegating others. This strengthens the team leader’s perceived leadership and improves the impression of an established team.

Strategy Meetings

Before a dress rehearsal can be fully productive, the team should have met sufficiently early to discuss key aspects of the presentations. These include the audience (identify Hot and Cold Buttons - see pages 1 and 2), style (formal/informal, standing/sitting, visuals/no visuals, handout, questioning), timings, topics, key point derivation, likely tough question areas and further research needed. Individual sections can

then be prepared.

Rehearsals

Team members are obliged to prepare their presentations well before rehearsals. The whole team should dress rehearse realistically and sufficiently well ahead of the event with actual seating, individual and total timings checked (and equipment, if used) in front of a ‘panel’ audience. Practice smooth hand-overs, to show that the team knows each other and works well together, cf. a rugby pass along the line. This is best done by the receiver knowing the final topic of each talk, and the passer giving the name of the person they are handing on to. Likely tough questions should be asked and feedback co-ordinated.

When Not Presenting

Presenting requires full concentration. Either side of presenting, team members should fulfil two useful roles: first, being attentive to (and rivetingly interested in) what the presenter is saying; second, watch the audience for signals and likely tough question areas. They should not be preparing their presentations, shuffling papers, doodling or looking bored!

Can you make 2 + 2 = 5?

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: Nov 20-21

2004: Feb 10-11, Apr 29-30,
June 7-8, July 8-9, Oct 28-29

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

Fine tune **YOUR VOICE**

It is widely known that a good voice has the power to motivate, inspire, persuade and lead. We also know that your voice encodes not only your unique personality but also your sub-conscious emotions. Following on from the article in our last newsletter about pace and eye contact, using data from our voice analysis reports, we look in a bit more detail at how the physical attributes influence the emotional output and give some tips for improvement.

The Approach

Until recently, how a voice sounds has been highly subjective. With the aid of our voice analysis software we can make a scientific and objective diagnosis of the voice. The voice is recorded in various states of emotional arousal and the physical attributes are measured. From this data we can generate an emotional score for qualities like dynamism, credibility and persuasiveness, which are measured against a reference.

Two Common Problems

1. Pitch Modulation

Modulation measures how often the voice rises and falls. A highly modulated voice goes up and down a lot and conveys genuine commitment and expression. If a voice lacks modulation, it sounds flat and boring. If the speaker sounds bored, guess how the audience are going to feel!!

Tip: Practice reading (for example children's stories) dramatically out loud putting lots of expression into your voice.

2. Fluency

One trend that is quite common is poor fluency. Fluency is measured by the rate of information output (RIO), which is defined as the number of useful units of speech per minute. A fluent voice has a high RIO.

Tip: To increase your RIO and remove disfluencies (Hesitant sounds such as "y'know", "sort of thing", "errm"), practice rhythmic speaking exercises accompanied by lots of body movement.

"The Song of Hiawatha" is particularly good. Once you have a good rhythm flowing, reduce the body movement to just tapping the foot, then to natural movements supportive of what you're saying.

Express Your Emotions

A trend that is very common especially in our UK clients is a reluctance to express their emotions. To the listener this can give the impression that the person is indifferent and lacks commitment. Interestingly enough, if you look at politicians, love them or hate them, many are very good at expressing their emotions. This is often what makes the difference between good communicators and bad communicators. We notice that often people think that it is shameful to be emotional about their business issues. They are sadly mistaken. It has been known since antiquity that you can influence people if you are emotionally committed.

Conclusion

These tips will help you, if you are sufficiently self-aware to know your voice and where you need to get better. We take the guesswork out of the process and ensure you apply the relevant tools.

James McBrien



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