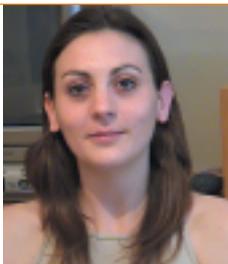


# Let me entertain you



**Sarah Cottam**

What do you want from your audience and what do they want from you? In theatre, this

intimacy between him and his audience: "I am addressing you my friends". Churchill roused people's emotions by his simple use of words: "The interests of property, the hours of labour, are nothing compared with the struggle for life and honour, for right and freedom, to which we have vowed ourselves".

“ ... in order to have an effect, a speaker must be able to communicate to an audience ”

“ Plato believed that each speech should be designed to unite the ‘souls’ of the speaker and the audience ”

is easy, essentially the audience wants to be entertained and the actor wants applause. Is it that different on any other platform?

Okay I admit, there's a lot more to it than that. But in order to have an effect, a speaker must be able to communicate to an audience. An audience entertained will be much more willing to listen.

Now I am not suggesting that you become a stand up comedian (far from it). Entertainment can be more subtle than that. In fact the definition of entertain is 1. to provide amusement for, 2. to show hospitality to, 3. to hold in their mind. It is this third definition that we need to concentrate on – to hold in the mind of the audience. To entertain an audience, you need to understand them, speak directly to them and engage them.

Take politicians for example, for years they have been entertaining audiences. Peggy Noonan, a well known American presidential speech writer, captured the essence of theatre and entertainment in political speeches... "A speech is a soliloquy, one man on a bare stage with a big spotlight...We lean forward, hungry to hear. Now it will be said, now we will hear the thing we long for. A speech is part theatre and part political declaration, it is **personal communication** between a leader and his people..."

Not all speeches are political but it is this personal communication between the speaker and the audience that is the key. Lloyd George spoke with his audience, not at them, treating his presentations as conversations: "Have you been down a coal mine? I was telling you I went down one the other day". Stalin managed to establish an

If we go further back, we find that this relationship between speaker and audience is at the core of Greek oratory. The speaker would evaluate the audience to decide which techniques would most easily allow the speaker to persuade the audience to accept their argument. Plato believed that each speech should be designed to unite the 'souls' of the speaker and the audience. [We will return to this subject in later articles, taking a deeper look into the art of Oratory].

So how does all this fit with modern business speeches?

- Think of your audience first and foremost and continue thinking about them throughout the creation and delivery of your presentation: Who are they? What do they want from you? What makes them tick? How can you appeal to them? How can you get what you want from them?
- When creating your presentation, bring in the F.B.I. (Feature, Benefit, Impact) and use the "So What?" test to create statements that will have an impact on the audience and hit hot buttons (Speak Up Edition 14).
- Speak with them and not to them. Use short phrases and uncomplicated language, think of the audience as one person and have a conversation with them. [continued overleaf >](#)

## Contents

Let me entertain you  
Sarah Cottam explores the art of entertaining, capturing and communicating with an audience during a presentation, in the first of a series of three articles on oratory.

### Networking – a pleasure or a necessary evil?

Alastair Grant gives advice and top tips on how to become a good networker.

### Words, Music and Dance

"It's not what you do but the way you do it". Ewan Pearson provides his views and some input on the relative importance of what you say, how you deliver your words and how you look when presenting.

# Let me entertain you

continued . . .

- Be informal and interactive. Take charge of your stage and make yourself comfortable.
- Engage the audience with eye contact – don't stare above their heads
- Make sure that your body language is consistent with your message. A fake smile doesn't fool anyone (Speak Up Edition 16).

And what about all other presentations? Essentially, the same rules apply, even when you are presenting to a very small audience of one or two people.

By understanding the importance of **personal communication** with your audience, you can entertain them with your presentation. In turn, they will be more willing to give you what you seek, be it understanding, buy in, future belief or to make the sale.

In some cases, you may even get that resounding round of applause!

To follow – "It's all Greek to me" and "What have the Romans ever done for us?" – a deeper look into the art of oratory.

“ By understanding the importance of **personal communication** with your audience, you can entertain them with your presentation.

In turn, they will be more willing to give you what you seek ”

# Networking - pleasure or necessary evil?

## Alastair Grant

All of us know that networking is a part of business and social life. For some of us it's our bread and butter but others neither like the concept nor see the need for it. We know that a good networker is likely to get more profitable business than someone who stays at home.

We define business networking as building up contacts to benefit ourselves and our business now. This could be expanded. For example making a contact may have no immediate benefit but may well in the future. The contact may refer you to someone else.

It sounds a manipulative exercise – chatting someone up not through genuine interest but merely to see what you can get out of them. That's quite possible but most will spot the fraud so this can back fire. Anyway it's a two way process where they could

“ Who should network?

Probably all of us ”

end up helping you or being given help by you without cost.

Who should network? Probably all of us. However it would be fair to say that those who need to sell and persuade have a higher need than an assembly worker in a factory. All professional people such as accountants, lawyers, bankers and brokers

“ When it comes to being hired the cliché “it's not what you know but who you know” is still quite true ”



will be better equipped to do their job through being in active contact with other humans rather than working in isolation. When it comes to being hired the cliché "It's not what you know but who you know" is still quite true.

Here are some ideas in a typical networking situation. You are attending an event on Asian commerce, perhaps after work, in a hotel sponsored by a firm. There may be a speaker but you also want to help promote your firm with the right people.

**Working The Room.** Diplomats learn early in their careers the need to achieve quick rapport and then move on to make maximum impact with as many as possible. Most of us suffer hesitation when faced with a room of strangers. There is a reluctance to break in. But chances are that they are all in the same boat.

## 6 Good networkers are adept at asking questions 9

**Achieving Rapport.** The easiest option is to approach another person on their own, smile and introduce yourself, they have to do the same in return. Listen carefully to their name and maybe adopt the American trick of repeating their name out loud to help embed it into your brain. I sometimes do a mental cartoon to associate their name with a physical feature. The next piece of rapport building is harder. A comment or question ought to start on low risk territory and yet not sound banal. What do you think of the weather today is feeble but how should we treat the situation in Iraq is rather too much. I generally ask an open question related to the reason for the meeting. What is your interest in Asian economies sounds about right. Open questions are generally better than closed ones, but watch out for 'why' questions which may appear intrusive.

**Build Common Ground.** This comes next, and is either social or business. We tend to trust people more if we share something in common yet we can be reluctant to unload our thoughts onto a stranger. So we must be skilled in probing and listening.

**Exploring Skills.** Good networkers are adept at asking questions. Typically the greater skill is asking good open questions. This has the effect of encouraging the other party to talk. Good networkers spend more time listening than jawing away.

**Active Listening.** However boring the other person, you must listen with gusto. Nod, make comment, reflect on what they say but not offering your opinion too quickly.

**Break-Off Tactics.** You have enjoyed the chat but there are others you want to talk to, but your listening skills are so good that it's hard to get away! You have some options. Brutally and candidly you might say "Do forgive me – there are a couple of people I really want to meet – would you excuse me". Try to avoid departing at the end of dialogue from them – it looks as if what they said wasn't interesting. Better by far make a comment and then whilst on transmit add your break-off phrase. Expressions like "I mustn't monopolise you as I am sure there are others you want to meet" might sound cheesy but could hit the spot. Another option is to offer a business card. One should be proffered back and so a signal is sent that the meeting has ended.

**Final Thoughts.** If you want to do something about a person you met then act quickly. Maybe a friendly email in the next 24 hours. It is also worth writing up notes right away because a week later your recall will have blurred.



# Words, Music and Dance

Ewan Pearson



"It's not what you do but the way you do it". Or is it?

I am troubled. Right from my first week as a presentation consultant in 1991, I have had doubts about a set of three statistics that seem to rule this area. Apparently, when you present, the relative impact of what you say (words), how you say the words (music) and how you look when saying words (dance) is respectively 7-10%, 30-40%, and 50% of the communication. I have always found these figures unsatisfactory, as (i) they are for an average presenter, yet we regularly deal with very good presenters and I wonder what the number crunchers would say for such people; (ii) these are surely too precise for the very broad range of speaking styles that people use, and (iii) I just felt they were plain wrong from personal observations. So I set about to discover the original source. Sadly, whilst I found the figures (and plenty of variants!) quoted all over the place, I have not found anything that looks like the original research showing these numbers. Anyone out there who knows of the research (as opposed to lots of other work quoting it) please let me know!

But on my travels I did come across lots of good research on the matter. There is some excellent work by Dr Albert Mehrabian done in 1971 that is certainly important for you to know, and may even be the real source of the 'words, music, dance' figures. Certainly some use him as the source, but we've contacted him and he hasn't owned up to it! Mehrabian has published an enormous amount of research at the University of California (UCLA).

For me the most telling is a different discovery of his. He studied the relative importance of two of the three elements in a communicator who has INCONSISTENCIES between 'words' and 'dance'. He found that the ratio was 1:12. Just to help the penny drop here, if you say the words "I really enjoy working for you", but look as if you don't, the 'don't' signal is TWELVE times as important. So the obvious advice is to ensure you DO look as if you mean it. Or just say something else where you can look as if you mean it!

Now for some of our clients this may seem irrelevant as they seem consistent – they say what they want to say, and look and sound as if they mean it. Or at least they think they do! I have seen clients be very effective, yet use their body only very modestly to communicate; others are all arms, yet highly effective. Some have very powerful or appealing voices, others select words very well.

Sadly – as I've said – I have yet to find the research that tells me the ratios for good presenters who are consistent. Despite (or perhaps because of) Mehrabian's work, I think words are far more important than disciples of the 'set of three' statistics accept. What do you think? Tell me at [e.pearson@gpbuk.com](mailto:e.pearson@gpbuk.com). For a look at Mehrabian, try his book 'Silent Messages', first published in 1971 and printed by Wadsworth.

## Our Services

Grant Pearson Brown 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 long 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.

## 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'.

2004: July 8-9, Oct 28-29, Nov 22-23

## 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.

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