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The year of Virtual Reality

Matthew Kalkman

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The Presentation & Business Development Specialists

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



“For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them” - Aristotle

GPB have just started working with ElexaVR on developing some innovative training techniques that involve a deep immersion into Virtual Reality (VR). So we asked Matt Kalkman there to explain what it’s all about:

This is a big year for Virtual Reality (VR). Facebook’s Oculus Rift is set to make a big splash, Samsung is already giving away free headsets with new phone purchases, and all of the major phone companies are investing large amounts of resources into this emerging market.



We are just starting to see the potential of what will be possible in this space. We at ElexaVR are especially excited about the possibilities in L&D (Learning and Development). Companies such as ours are bringing big innovations to this area of corporate training.

VR could potentially cause a paradigm shift in corporate training. The question naturally turns to: why VR? It claims its main benefits are faster turnaround times in putting knowledge into practical use, and longer and greater retention of skills learned. VR’s proper implementation will improve productivity while saving costs. What makes it such a fruitful tool is its effectiveness in active, experiential and mobile forms of learning.

The great bonus to L&D is that the technology has already been paid for. Almost everyone already has a smartphone in their pocket or handbag.

To understand the process, and why it might be so useful in practice, it is important to look at the field of experiential learning.

Experiential learning stems from research by John Dewey, David Kolb, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, and others. Two worth reflecting on here are Kurt Lewin and David Kolb: Kurt Lewin was the first to suggest that knowledge is formed by the learner when they have the time to reflect on a scenario they have just experienced.



It is the time between the experience and the experimentation that allows the formation of meaningful knowledge. This time is the key to virtual reality learning, as it is the only environment that allows room for experiential simulation through

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The year of Virtual Reality.... continued

to experimentation. The research of David Kolb has gone further into the learning styles model, which describes a staged process. The core of the model revolves around four stages to transform information into useable knowledge.

The first stage is the experience itself. The second is a proper amount of reflection time on the experience. The third is the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations.

gap. With virtual reality, the learner is placed directly into an environment that commands their complete attention. For most forms of learning another major issue is that they don't allow the learner to immediately try newfound information in a practical experience.

How does the system operate?

ElexaVR can offer tailor-made training designed specifically for your



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The fourth is to put that into active experimentation. The experience then repeats itself. VR successfully manages the entire cycle in one sitting. Other forms of e-learning do not provide the feeling of experiencing an issue in the first place.

Training can be an expensive endeavour, and having a process that goes through a proper step-by-step experiential form of learning will bring great savings to any organization.

Furthermore, there are other key gaps in traditional forms of e-learning. Three gaps that will immediately be closed are: attention gaps; time-effectiveness gaps; and pedagogical gaps. Interrupting the flow of learning is a major detriment to creating useable knowledge.

In the era of distraction, current forms of e-learning do nothing to overcome this

organization. Upon deciding the direction of training, we work to produce a complete visually immersive training program. The training will be delivered through a specially designed app that can be accessed by anyone on their smartphones.

There are currently two options for viewing: one option is to purchase electronic headsets; the more affordable approach is to purchase specially designed cardboard headsets (that could have your company's logo printed on the outside).

These small investments pay large dividends to the productivity of your organization, and the overall savings on learning and development costs. So stay tuned, it's a big year ahead for VR.

Matthew Kalkman

Determining your communication risk profile

Richard Keith



Many of you have pensions or investments and know well the potential benefits and dangers of increasing your risk profile. But how many of you make similar judgments regarding risks when it comes to communicating?

We work with many firms helping them pitch and sell, both advising directly on specific transactions and running workshops and 1-1 sessions. We find ourselves advising our clients regularly to be more *daring* in both what they say and how they present their pitch.

In a world where few firms are brave enough to challenge the pre-conceived perceptions of how pitching and selling is done, being able to differentiate yourself positively is a powerful message in itself that can help you stand out for all the right reasons.



Taking risks should have rewards

No risky business?

Why are so many of us afraid to take these types of risks? There are, it seems, two primary reasons. Firstly, there is simple loss aversion. As has been demonstrated scientifically, the psychological drive to avoid a loss is greater than the drive to achieve a gain¹ – hence, the majority of us have a natural tendency to ‘play it safe’ in these circumstances, intuitively believing it is the best thing to do.

Secondly, cultural (with a small c) factors influence us. From our schooling all the way up to our current corporate world, we exist largely in an environment where we are expected to get things right. To be wrong or to make a mistake is to be less smart or less able than our peers.

This, of course, isn’t true: you can’t read an interview with a highly successful person these days without them talking about how their numerous failures taught

them more than their successes. But in practice most of us have developed a psychology that fears mistakes to the extent that we are afraid to take calculated risks in a professional environment.

Taking risks when trying to win work

There are two complementary parts to winning business effectively: first there is “not losing the sale” and then there is “winning the sale”. I’ll come back to not losing a sale in a moment, but let’s look initially at the “winning it” part. The best way of doing this is to be positively outstanding (in the true sense) rather than merely the darkest shade of grey on the colour palette. Standing out distinctly probably means taking risks.

Let’s make one thing clear – we’re not advocating coming into the sales meeting riding a shark or juggling fire. The type of risks we are talking about are those that are brave yet calculated, unusual but performed with a specific intention, all backed up by sensible reasons. Let me give you some simple examples.



A risk too far?

In December I wrote about the scientifically measured impact of storytelling to make your points memorable and to add texture to the impression of you as a speaker – but have you told any stories since reading that article? Possibly not – it takes courage and can feel pretty risky when you try it at first, but the impact can be huge.

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Richard Keith

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¹Köbberling, V. & Wakker, Peter, P., “An index of loss aversion” in *Journal of Economic Theory* (2005), Vol 122, Issue 1, pp.119-131



Determining your communication risk profile ...continued

How about other areas of content? When was the last time you went to a pitch with only one key message – rather than the commonplace three (or even more!)– that was a complete knock-out blow and started an in-depth conversation about your relevant strengths and experience? We've seen this done well, and the effect can be exceptional.

Or even your speaking style? Have you employed the famous power of the pause to its full extent? Only this week a client was telling me of his fear of using pauses believing (erroneously) that people would think he doesn't know what he's saying.

It takes courage to leave your key points resonating in the air for all to absorb, but it's exceptionally impactful when you do.



An uncommon sign on the presentation road...

I say again, don't take risks just to be different; but provided you have sensible and compelling reasons for doing so, go ahead and take the risks.

Let's look now at "not losing business". This is the avoidance of 'cold buttons' that put a client off choosing you. You avoid these by knowing your client well. You have to build rapport with them before the pitch, establish trust, ask questions, and use these skills to gather valuable information.

Here's the best part: as with all investments, greater analysis allows for better assessment of risk. When you know your client well you can learn what they dislike in their pitches, what they don't want to focus on during the meeting, even what type of style and humour they dislike. Suddenly, the elements that you initially thought of as risky are perfectly sensible – the risk level has decreased whilst the possible returns have grown.

For instance, if your firm traditionally takes a PowerPoint presentation to a pitch but your pre-sale contact with your next potential client has informed you that they HATE PowerPoint, then you should build that pitch without slides. Turning up to a different client without the slide deck could be a risk possibly suggesting to your boss or client that you haven't prepared: turning up to *this* client without the deck isn't a risk at all, it's exactly what you should do.

Too often we hear people say when pitching "I have to do that – the client expects it". To which we reply, why give them what they expect? Your client wants – and needs – to know certain things in order to select you, and you should absolutely satisfy those cravings.

Yet if you can do this in a way that contains positive surprises then you stand a much better chance of winning the business.

Certainly, it takes more thought and effort, both before and during the pitch, but it's worth it.

As Mark Zuckerberg said: "*The biggest risk is not taking any risk*".

Richard Keith

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The rise in demand for Public Speaking

Lynda Russell-Whitaker



The British Events industry was worth £39.1 billion in 2013 and £19.9 billion of that came from conferences and meetings. (Source: *Business Visits and Events Partnership*.)

There has been healthy growth in the conference sector over the past two years and it's showing no signs of slowing down.

As Nigel Cooper, Managing Director at P&MM, a UK marketing agency, says:

"In an age when connectivity between a brand and its consumer or a business and its staff is key, face-to-face events are a vital tool."

That's very intriguing, amidst what is frankly a bewildering array of new technology.

In her article for **Raconteur**, 'Create an experience not an event', Clare Gascoigne writes:

"It's time to step away from the PowerPoint presentation and make business events a memorable experience to capture the attention - and imagination - of customers."



It's waiting for you....

I agree with Clare. Unfortunately, too many people stepping up to the podium don't step far enough away from their PowerPoint presentations.

Instead of using slides *sparingly* to support the compelling delivery of an engaging presentation, the vast majority of presenters use them as if they're a script, reading every packed line in a bland monotone voice.

Tim Leighton is a Senior Vice President and Creative Strategy Director at one of GPB's clients, Jack Morton Worldwide, an events agency. Quite rightly Tim talks about using visuals in a way that best support your aims:

"That might still mean a slide presentation in a conference hall, but those slides had better be working hard and your presentation had better be good."

But Public Speaking is no longer just for the Chief Executive or other 'C' suite members.

For a variety of reasons, there is a multitude of face-to-face events, that involve new technology, taking place in the UK and around the world. Combine the need to be good with some of that very clever innovative technology, and what emerges is a new breed of Public Speaker. This will require the average untrained, unrehearsed speaker to considerably raise their game.

Unfortunately, so many presentations are the antithesis of engaging. This often seems to be the case in the tech space, at least from my experience. It's all very well watching hours of TED and TEDx talks online, but if we don't learn any of the good habits of the best of those presenters and apply them to our talks, it's unlikely that audiences will be captivated by what we have to say, let alone retain the key messages we are asking them to act on.

I had the pleasure of working with a design industry client on a key presentation for his company a few months ago. It was for 'Packaging Innovations 2015', one of their most important annual industry conferences.

We put a lot of work in together over the course of several sessions over several weeks, working initially on content then

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Lynda Russell-Whitaker

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The rise in demand for Public Speaking ...continued

on delivery. He is the Founder and has been Managing Director of Finish Creative Services for over 25 years, so you can imagine how often he has delivered pitches and presentations. Yet he maintains that this was the best presentation he had ever given - and he got fantastic feedback from clients, colleagues and peers.

A key part of this was because there was such a strong narrative that ran throughout. He also made it a personal story - about innovation in packaging, of all seemingly mundane things.

He started with a story about early Tetra Paks, going on to ring pulls, and went from his childhood in the 60s through to present today.

He used a combination of archive black and white footage and recent video to show off the amazing technology and skill employed in the studio.

He accompanied this with succinct text (just a few bullet points!) on his PowerPoint slides - all supporting his story of the often subtle evolution of packaging over 50 years.

We rehearsed his delivery several times during our coaching sessions including in front of the directors, then the staff.

Rehearsing is another area where many presenters think they can skip. I have definitely been guilty of this at times - and no matter who you are, it shows.

It's clear to me that Public Speaking has become far too competitive to get on a podium without being really well-prepared; and that includes doing a substantial amount of research into your audience and giving a lot of thought to your narrative.

Further, for those of you who are now regular readers of our "SpeakUp!" Journal, you'll have seen us write about Aristotle's Three Appeals, The Two Routes to Persuasion and probably VAK (Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic) learning styles too.

People process and absorb information in different ways, and a good presenter will also consider this when designing their presentation.

Preparation time

Nancy Duarte, the presentation and communications specialist who created the graphics that formed the basis of Al Gore's award-winning film 'An Inconvenient Truth', asserts that it takes 90 hours to craft a world-class 60 minute, 30 slide presentation, with a third of that time allocated to rehearsing. That puts preparation into perspective, even if many of us won't be developing hour-long presentations.

Most of us won't put in anywhere near 30 hours of rehearsal time either, but even a third or a quarter of that would transform most presentations. So I'd like to finish this article with a quote from Chris Anderson's new book, "TED talks" (p148):

"Most of the big TED hits happened only because of the hours of prep the speaker put in."

Lynda Russell-Whitaker



(Ed: Chris Anderson, above in 2007, owner and head of TED since 2000, visited London last week. It is clear from his talks that in order to give a great TED talk, rehearsal has to go beyond the point where it looks learned to the point where it no longer does. He commented that sometimes this can take a very long time, and some people never get there!)

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Why do so few CEOs give “Killer Speeches”?

Ewan Pearson



Anyone reading the other articles in this Journal will see a theme....that speaking in public seems to be a very important thing for company CEOs and other leaders of organisations to do, and do well. Yes, true, but why?

I recently addressed this question during a seminar (and some of you were there...). It is a constant query for us, so I thought we should download some of our thoughts to you, and see what we can do about it.

Actually, we should first challenge the premise, as we don't really know for sure that CEOs aren't banging out the grandest greatest most inspirational speeches of all time, as most of their speeches are done behind closed doors, in private.

So let's assume that at least a few do, and if you could write in to tell us who, we'd be delighted (Rule 1: You can't choose your boss).



An appreciative audience

A second challenge could even be on the idea that such speeches should be given. But if that were the case, then why do CEO forums ask me to pontificate on the subject?

No, I don't think that's it.

From what people who work for a living tell me, most CEOs just don't give killer speeches. Some give some quite good ones, some are even called 'motivational', but when challenged to tell me what the messages were, there is an awkward

silence... and then an admission that whilst they were 'moved', they are not sure why, where or how.

The commonly stated reasons for the absence of killer speeches include (a) the CEOs don't know how to give one, (b) it's too risky, (c) they don't have a forum for doing so, (d) they don't have time to prepare, (e) what's the point? and (f) all or a combination of the above.

That first reason is a bit tragic given the amount of money spent on CEO communications in its various guises. It's a tidy sum, largely devoted to internal resources, but some of it is even spent on us! Could inability really be the main cause?

The second reason - risk - is the most common one given. These CEOs are marshalling vast sums of shareholders' money, and they have seen many a fellow or famous CEO burned in public by saying the wrong thing. But surely if a 'Killer Speech' is needed to move or motivate people, to cause a change in behaviour, energy, or action, the risk is worth taking. Indeed, surely it is not negotiable, it just has to be done, with all avoidable risks mitigated. Richard Keith's article on p. 3-4 has more on that.

The trouble is that removing anything interesting, controversial, outspoken or radical i.e. 'risky', that might be said, takes out the 'kill' from 'killer'.... leaving you just with, well... 'er'.

If you (as I do) accept the theme of Richard's article in this publication - that speakers should be a bit more *daring* - then it would seem that this is more a smoke screen than a real reason.

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Ewan Pearson

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Why do so few CEOs give “Killer Speeches”? ...continued

Our Services

Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd (GPB) is a respected adviser based in London. We enhance the performance of businesses, helping clients to excel in the use of the spoken and written 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, Telephone Calls and Document Writing.

We also produce scientific Voice, Visual and Content Analysis reports, then provide content, voice coaching and non verbal communications advice.

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. In support of this we selectively pursue new ideas and approaches, continually hone our advice and create tools such as Prospect Relationship Management (PRM), Just a Minute, the Fire Bell Test and the Information Iceberg.

The ‘lack of a forum’ reason is surely also not legit. There are ‘Town Halls’ in town halls all over the place – communication events where the CEO speaks to senior staff or all staff to get a message across, to stir management and employees to greater achievement, to achieve stretch targets, to ‘*new paradigms*’ on long hard ‘*journeys*’, and to think/work/perform ‘*outside the envelope*’. This language may be a further reason for the lack of killer speeches, but let’s not go there....

Lack of time to prepare? Are you kidding? Most CEOs we work with recite their job



The Roman Forum, where (literally) Killer Speeches were often given.

description as ‘speaking to people all the time, with a bit of strategizing in between’. Frankly, whilst it might be true, CEOs absolutely need to make the time!

“*What’s the point?* I haven’t got anything killer to say”. I don’t think this is a good reason. Whilst it’s good to challenge the purpose and effectiveness of actions from time to time – as our guest article on Virtual Reality training aptly does, the ‘*point*’ of the Killer Speech should be obvious – it is to get a vital message across immediately to a small, medium or

large group of important people (which can run to thousands of people at all-staff offsites) in the most effective and compelling way.

Emails don’t tend to do it as acts of ‘killer communication’, although we have all seen emails that killed a CEO’s career. Sending out staff documents doesn’t cut the mustard either. No, it needs to be a killer *speech* from the CEO *in person*.

So, what’s the answer?

We think the real reason IS the first one – most CEOs are willing enough, but they just don’t know how to create and deliver killer speeches.

They have not been through Aristotle’s Three Appeals, they have not learned the use of Rhetorical Tools at University degree level, and have not studied the modern scientific research on persuasion. They have not deconstructed speeches to analyse structure, flow, linkage, and signposting.

They are chemists, accountants, lawyers, bankers, and business people. Where on those career paths did Killer Speech training get a mention?!

So, the first time they get to CEO level they find the job involves a lot of ‘jaw-jaw’, and they set about earnestly learning a new skill with varying amounts of success. And yes, it is a skill anyone can learn. That’s where we come in. Or you can try to learn everything by buying a ‘how to’ book at the airport. Good luck with that!

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