



Hard graft or hard luck

Grant Pearson Brown
Consulting Ltd.

The Presentation &
Business Development
Specialists

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts



Welcome to our
35th Journal – Autumn 2009

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Hard graft or hard luck

Ewan Pearson explains how preparing for a pitch can be hard work but blood, sweat and tears can reap hefty rewards...

'Congratulations...now get a job!'

With many parents concerned over their children's future Alastair Grant goes back to basics with interview skills for those who are just starting out.

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Carl Schreiter offers a guide to using signpost language to get your points across in presentations.

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Part 1: Separating the person from the problem

Tim Farish gives advice about how to successfully negotiate a deal without getting emotionally attached.

Ewan Pearson

I was sculling along in my boat on the Thames at Pangbourne one lovely sunny Saturday. Then it hit me!

No, it wasn't a tree suddenly leaping out into the river, although I did get a bit close at times, it was this: "There is no room for hedonism (the pursuit of pleasure as a matter of ethical principle) in pitching". Yes, profound, philosophical and a bit weird.

It's fair to say that as I was only 5 minutes into a 1 hour training piece I was feeling a little 'blue'. But

just the hope that competitors will also not be out training hard. In rowing, you can never rely on that, with competitors sneaking out on Christmas Day, just to get an extra session in when others might have their feet up or munching on turkey. I have been known to sneak out too....

But do we have to forego a bit of fun (hedonism) whilst preparing for pitches? Well, I had the rest of the hour's training to go, so it became a suitable mind-bending distraction from the toil. Here's what I concluded:



Doing time....

actually I was thinking about a client pitching workshop we were preparing for, and I realised there was a connection between the hard graft of long training sessions to build enough endurance fitness for winning winter races, and the preparation for a major pitch.

In every pitch there is the hard grinding phase, where it is just long miles of work to build a strong case for winning. Most clients just don't do these hard miles and instead rely on winging it, flair, or

Some of the tender and pitch preparation is fun, just as it should be. The short meetings with clients, the team content build and the rehearsals should all be enjoyable. Anyone who is not enjoying it will not be motivated, enthused and working towards the goal of winning.

But other, longer, parts of the pitch preparation are just hard graft and not much fun. And like rowing training, this work should not be avoided or given

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lower status but instead recognised and encouraged for the winning edge it brings.

For example, reading, writing and then proof-reading tender documents takes hours and hours. Whilst doing this there has to be a real eye for detail and accuracy, to spot opportunities and threats in the buyer's brief, and to spot errors and omissions in your own responses to ITTs (Invitations to Tender) and RfPs (Requests for Proposals). And also to spot potential places where you can stand out through PoDs (Points of Differentiation) and USPs (Unique Selling Points) in a relevant and beneficial way for your client.

Graft, graft and more graft really pays off. I know it does from seeing so many tenders and pitches that we have advised on over our 20 years in this field. And we at GPB have to do tenders and pitches ourselves. All this preparation may be disliked, but it really pays off.

I'll focus on two graft areas here: your tender document and rehearsing.

The tender documents for some pitches we have worked on (e.g. FTSE-100 audit pitches) run not just to 100 pages or more, but sometimes there are several books each of 100 pages. When I speak to the client buyers who have to read this, they tell me two key things: First they are fussy about the writing skills – the layout/structure, the language/readability, the grammar and the punctuation. For example, the recent news coverage concerning yucky and overused apostrophes

(tomato's, potato's, MoT's, PC's) just reinforces what I know really bugs tender document readers so much that it can lose you a pitch. So get others (not just one other) to proof-read, proof-read and proof-read again. Preferably ask someone who has an eye for detail but doesn't know your business well to do this, as they will also spot unrealised language barriers – complexity and jargon for example.

Second, if you make the short-list, an oral pitch presentation and question session are likely. For this you should rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse much more than you (or I) have so far thought necessary. I recently worked with someone about to do a pitch that he had delivered a few times before. We took his key page then rehearsed it properly, out loud with a video camera, 5 times. We did the grind work; each time he presented we stopped, discussed it briefly then had another go. He got clearer and more concise, and more certain of what he wanted to say each time. I did this (I thought) to excess as an experiment, but I could not believe the enormous improvement that happened by the final run through. He saw the improvement, and had what he said was a 'eureka' moment in realising just how well he could deliver the key content.

So for any of you lucky enough to have a tender to write or a pitch to deliver, remember the phrase coined by Steve Fairbairn, a famous rowing coach from a century ago: "Mileage makes Champions". Miss this hard graft out and it will be hard luck for you. And that would be a real shame.



Hard graft pays off for Cambridge

'Congratulations...now get a job!'



Alastair Grant

Young adults work hard and gain paper qualifications. But the pride of wearing academic regalia is swiftly dispelled by the reality of the job market.

It is not just those out of university but a wider tranche of younger graduates who need to raise their game in communication and social skills. It could be that the advice here is pertinent to older people as well!



One way to stand out!

On occasions I have been asked to coach a young adult before an important interview. The task is straightforward but often in the background I detect *other things*. So here I have outlined some ideas on interviews which should be applicable to a wide range of situations, not just for University or a first job. Indeed the job market is more competitive than ever. How do you stand out against a large crowd? Young adults often work extremely hard to

gain good academic results yet lack confidence in a wider range of social skills. Good schools have a go with education on welfare, drugs, sex and racial equality but perhaps not much more than that. Moreover there is a shortage of communication, social and life skills. Consider how impressed you would be by a young adult who can:

- Engage people from a wide background and age in conversation and are able to take an interest in what they say rather than talking about themselves.
- Write a thank you letter that is so pleasing to the recipient as to mark them out.
- Conduct a convivial conversation at meals and show impeccable manners.
- Turn themselves out well in terms of dress and grooming.
- Present ideas with clarity and confidence.
- Successfully negotiate their accommodation rental.

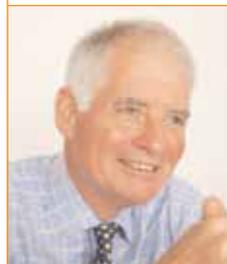
This is bit of a hotch potch of skills. It almost sounds like a trailer for 'Ladettes to Ladies' or a prospectus for a finishing school. Yet those young people who shine in these areas can differentiate themselves to advantage. It's certainly not about class, background or race. This article highlights and offers advice on something mentioned not just by parents but by managers who run graduate programmes.

Interview skills for the young (and not so young)

Preparation – Information

Don't be lazy, find out relevant information before the interview. The website is a good start. Try to talk to others who have gone before you. What was good and bad about their interviews? Find out how long the interview is, how many people are in the room with you and who they are.

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'Congratulations now get a job!' ...continued

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Preparation – Logistics

Make sure you know the exact destination, how to get there, is there parking? Do you have the right phone number on your mobile if you are running late? Do you need to bring anything along, perhaps an example of your work?

Preparation – Appearance

Dress style is often unclear. If you are not sure it is best to be smartly dressed and be well groomed. That means clean shiny shoes, clean teeth, clean and short finger nails. No stains or dirt on your clothing, hair brushed and tidy. First appearances are important – some say vital.

Preparation – Questions

You should have an idea of the more important questions. These are typically:

Why do you wish to work here?

Tell me about something that you are proud to have achieved.

Tell me about some setback that you have faced. What have you learnt from it?

What do you hope to do once you have joined us?

It is well worth rehearsing your answers – this will build confidence. But take care to stay natural in your responses. Also, think of three good questions to ask them.

Interview - First Impressions

Apart from being well turned out and on time, think about the first 60 seconds. Many say that they make their minds up in that short period. This is not entirely logical but don't get eliminated in that first nervous moment. Get your posture right – walk into the room upright and with a smile. They will, or should, take the initiative. Be ready to shake hands – apply medium pressure and look them in the eye. Don't start to blurt out unrehearsed blabber. It may be as brief as *Thank You* when greeted or asked to take a seat or a short answer to an icebreaking question like *How was your journey today?* Once seated, lean forward slightly and keep your bottom at the back of the seat.

Interview - Answering Questions

Listen carefully and pause. Don't start revving up your answer whilst they are speaking. By pausing you appear to consider the question, and show that you did so.

Give brief answers. They can always ask for more but if you ramble and waffle then they will get bored or lose track of what you are trying to say.

Do try to back up your answers with examples. This makes it easier for the other party to understand your point and better still they are more likely to remember you afterwards. To be forgotten is fatal.

With negative points do tell the truth but do not overdo it. Try to bridge towards the positive. Let's say one of your grades is low. *Yes I was disappointed to get a C in that subject but overall I am pleased with my results which were better than predicted.*

If you don't understand a question, don't be fazed by it. Ask for clarification.

Finally answer with a degree of enthusiasm and confidence. Hold eye contact with the other party.

Be happy to ask them some questions - indeed that should be part of your preparation, and shows interest in them.

At the end leave with dignity and head held high.



We've all got to work for someone

And now for something completely different...



Carl Schreiter

When you drive on the roads, through a town or a city, you normally know where you came from, where you are and where you're heading. Every village, town or city has a name. Each road and street has a name or number. If you are at No. 37, you can go back to No. 30 or forward to No. 40. There is plenty of information to guide you – in the form of signposts: Birmingham 13, M1, London Road, 4 Maple Crescent etc. Signposts make navigating easy and save you the hassle of getting lost.

tell you about our plans to expand in Asia in 2010. Lastly, I'll quickly recap before concluding with some recommendations that I hope you'll find useful."

This certainly sounds like a well thought out itinerary with a number of interesting stop-overs and a final destination to justify the journey, the recommendations.

A good presenter will use the right amount of signposting, so it is a good idea to learn and use a



Which way now?

Presentations are a bit like landscapes with roads going through them. You, the presenter, are in the driver's seat and your audience members are your passengers, all eager to know where you're taking them and how. To get yourself into the right frame of mind, think of them as kids stuck in the back seat of a people carrier chanting the all-so-familiar phrase: "Are we there yet?"

There is nothing worse than losing your audience. A good and simple way to make your presentations interesting, effective and easy to follow is to use signpost language or signposting. 'Signpost language' is the words and phrases that you can use to tell your listeners what has just happened and what's coming next. Simply put, signposting guides the audience through the presentation. Here's a speaker pulling out the roadmap:

"I'll start by describing a few interesting business cases here in the UK. Then I'll move on to some success stories in continental Europe. After that, I'll

few of the common phrases. These are not difficult to learn and it is quite important that you use them to emphasise the structure and flow of your presentation. Here are a few more examples to illustrate its actual usage:

When you want to make your next point, you 'move on'.

- "Moving on to (the next point)..."
- "If there are no further questions, I'd like to move on to (the next point)..."

When you want to give more details about a topic you 'expand' or 'elaborate'.

- "I'd like to expand more on the opportunity we have found in Manchester..."
- "Would you like me to expand a little more on that or are you happy?"
- "I'd rather not elaborate any more on that as I'm short of time..."

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And now for something completely different... ...continued

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



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When you want to change to a completely different topic, you 'turn to':

- "I'd like to *turn to* something completely different..." , (new topic)
- "Let's *turn* now to our plans for 2010..."

To just give the outline of a point, you 'summarise':

- If I could just *summarise* a few points from Benjamin's report.
- I don't have a lot of time left so I'm going to *summarise* the next few points.

When you want to refer back to an earlier point, you 'go back':

- *Going back* to something I said earlier, the position in Manchester is complex.
- I'd like to *go back* to something Jenny said in her presentation.

To repeat the main points of what you have said, you 'recap':

- I'd like to quickly *recap* the main points of my presentation...
- *Recapping* quickly on what we discussed this morning,.....

For your final remarks, you 'conclude':

- I'd like to *conclude* by leaving you with this thought
- If I may *conclude* by quoting Warren Beatty

"And now over to another structural tool – connectives. Firstly, I would like explain what connectives are, then what their benefits are. Lastly, I will give you a few examples of how you can use them in the real world."

Connectives are words that indicate logical relations between clauses and sentences. Though similar to signposts, they tend to be shorter and are specifically designed to list your arguments and to signal the logical relations between argument and evidence. The appropriate use of connectives will reveal and reinforce the direction that your arguments are taking and the relations between sections of your speech. The benefit to you is that your argumentation will appear to be more structured, more coherent and hence more compelling. Here are a few examples:

Addition: *also, too, similarly, in addition, even, indeed, let alone.*

Example: There is increasing demand for our services. *Indeed*, last month the number of booked and confirmed appointments was up by 30%.

Opposition: *however, nevertheless, on the other hand, in contrast, though, yet, even so.*

Example: Our profit margins are good, *yet* we still need to look at overheads.

Emphasising: *above all, in particular, especially, significantly.*

Example: It's difficult to forecast profits, *especially* in the current economic climate.

Explaining: *for example, for instance, in other words, that is to say, i.e., e.g.*

Example: According to a recent article in *The Financial Times*, the number of UK IPOs has risen dramatically. *For example*, last year's £20.6 billion in IPOs represents a 22 percent increase over 2007 and a 170 percent increase from 2006.

Indicating result: *therefore, consequently, as a result, so, then.*

Example: Our marketing campaign has been a great success. *As a result*, we have increased sales.

Indicating time: *then, meanwhile, later, afterwards, before (that), since (then), meanwhile*

Example: We need to improve the quality of our services. *Then*, we can begin to think about marketing.

This may seem a bit like Presentation Techniques 101, but the importance of adhering to basic principles can never be overstated. And that applies to any field. Ever experienced a beautifully cooked piece of meat savagely served on a cold plate? Disappointment is the only likely outcome.

Through a consistent, clever and tactical use of signposts and connectives, your audiences will see you as the unchallenged driver of your messages, willing to follow you in whatever direction you decide to take them. That being said, there is no verbal remedy for small bladders...



Ah...that's helpful



The art of negotiating

Part 1: Separating the person from the problem

Tim Farish

There is nothing like a bit of personal attachment to prevent the best deal from happening. I'm sure that everyone reading this will recognise themselves as being guilty (at least once!) of holding on too tight to things when we would be better off being more objective. The typical reason this happens is the thing that makes us human – our emotions. Or, in more simple negotiating terms, an inability to separate the person from the issue at hand.

Think of that deal you paid too much for, or that contract you offered too cheaply, or even the fee you reduced too soon. The one thing they probably all have in common is that the value was heavily influenced by the emotions of one of the parties involved.

There is a saying – 'Be soft on people but hard on problems' which applies well to the world of negotiating. What this really means is that you will get a more favourable deal by separating the two with a bit of planning in advance. So, how are you supposed to do this? Well, the first thing to do is realise your ideal outcome and objective. The next thing to bear in mind is your 'walkaway' position. So, let's say you're buying a boat and you feel happy with a purchase range of £40-50k but you do not want to pay more than £55k then you are clear on both ideal range and walkaway. However,

to be truly prepared you do need to be willing to walk away! Knowing this before you enter a negotiation allows you to remain unattached to pressure or excitement, which in the absence of a walkaway position, can drastically alter the outcome.

The second thing to do is map out all the additional elements of any deal. These are often referred to as 'tradeables' or concessions and can also play a big role in the outcome. Using the boat purchase example above, there are whole lists of concessions which can be considered from the following:

- What's the method and type of payment plan?
- Is delivery included?
- Who pays mooring costs?
- Mooring licenses for national/international ports?
- Radar/comms equipment included?
- Kitchen/living equipment included?
- Navigation maps included?
- Maintenance agreement?
- Freshly cleaned/painted?
- Dinghy/Lifejackets included?



Mine, no mine, no mine!



The art of negotiating

Part 1: Separating the person from the problem ...continued

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Such items could make a big difference to any price negotiation so are worth considering before you start. A useful exercise which will help map out these concessions from a buyer's perspective of any product or service is to spend a few minutes thinking through the first few months' ownership from the initial point of sale. This, of course, assumes a reasonable knowledge of what you are buying. If you are unfamiliar with your buying area then it is worth finding someone who understands it well and picking their brains as they might be able to save you a lot of money!

So, you've established your positions and you've mapped out your tradeables. What next? Well, the next thing we would suggest is to prioritise your list of tradeables in order of value, both to you and the other party. Then try to offer concessions of low cost to you but of high value to the counterparty. Whether buying or selling, this will give you a good idea of how and when to introduce each one in the negotiation depending on how you are getting on. We would then suggest coming in with a reasonable offer at the lower end of your ideal range as this allows for movement upwards that is still within your range. Or you can even be cheeky and shock them with your first offer. One final thing on establishing tradeables or concessions – it is always worth considering leaving something on the table for the other party so that they feel a

sense of goodwill at the end of any negotiation. Staying with the boat example, if selling you could include some extra lifejackets and offer an extra discount if paying immediately with cash as a final gesture of goodwill. Good negotiators will make sure that it is still low cost to themselves while maintaining high value to the other party but if done well it will leave the other party with a positive impression that they really DID get a good deal!

So now you have done your preparation you are ready to go. Well, almost. If you are to be successful you still need to remember to distance the process from the person you are dealing with. We would advise you to maintain a good working relationship at all times while always coming back to the facts of what you want to achieve. Remember, most people give in too early or bow to emotional pressure ('I can't sell it for that, my partner will kill me! ') from the other party when they were actually close to getting a better deal. With a smile on your face you can let them know that you would be prepared to raise your offer slightly if they were to include the dinghy, three lifejackets and a fresh lick of paint. Deal?

In the next issue, The Art of Negotiating Part 2, will look at the different pressures and tactics involved.

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 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 and face analysis reports, then provide 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. Through our own innovative culture we selectively pursue new ideas and approaches, continually hone our advice and create tools such as Voice & Face Analysis, Prospect Relationship Management (PRM) and the Information Iceberg.



"Please, Mr. Wolf, now we're just splitting hares."



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