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speakup

WINNER -WHAT'S THE POINT OF POWER?

Congratulations and a bottle of Champagne to Peter Marcus.

In our Spring Newsletter, Ewan Pearson asked the question "How many ways can you find (and what are they) of bringing up the next slide on a screen?" We had a terrific response with some excellent answers, but the first to respond with the complete set of correct answers (and some more) was Peter Marcus from The Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Peter's winning answers were:

1. Enter key
2. Return key
3. Down arrow key
4. Right arrow key
5. 6/R arrow numerical key
6. 2/down arrow numerical key
7. Space bar
8. "N" key
9. Page Down key
10. Key in number of next slide, followed by Return/Enter
11. Mouse click
12. Remote control
13. Stand imperiously at the front of audience and shout "Next"
14. Feign useless technophobia until someone takes pity.



So there you have it. That's some software program!

Contents

SO YOU WANT ME TO READ FROM A SCRIPT!

Reading from a script is a charisma bypass job. Or is it? Alastair Grant explains how GPB could help you to read from a script without your audience even realising you are doing so.

DO YOU SHOOT FROM THE HIP?

Have you heard the one about the plc Director who answered a question so badly that their share price fell 30%? Ewan Pearson gives some top tips for handling questions so that you may avoid such disasters.

CAN YOU SPEAK EYAK?

About 3,400, or half, of the world's 6,800 languages are threatened with extinction! Ewan Pearson examines the grim forecast for these endangered languages.



you want me **So** *to read from* **a script?**



Do you read from a script?

The answer is invariably:

No way!

But why not? After all if you are nervous, need to keep to time and wish to avoid being misquoted then all you have to do is read the stuff out.

The response is predictable. Reading from a script is surely a charisma bypass job. We all have a supposed model of excellence of the person who spoke brilliantly without a note in sight. We also have the negative image of someone, head down, flat voice, clearly reading out words.

Did you know that Winston Churchill read most of his best speeches from a script? How does Alistair Cook in his letter from America speak for precisely 15 minutes?

Politicians, radio journalists and priests in pulpits learn that the words they carve with such care cannot be committed to memory without huge

effort. They learn to read verbatim without it being apparent. We coach people to do the same. Initial unease gives way to reluctant acceptance and then happy commitment. Reading from a script is full of paradoxes. When asked to read we instinctively try to look at the audience as we roll out our ideas but then we dive down with our eyes to see what we are supposed to be saying next, but in so doing dismiss our audience at what we call the "engagement point." Our brains make us look down as we don't want to be stranded with nothing to say! But in normal conversation between two people we do the opposite – we hold eye contact at the end of the idea to seek their agreement to continue the conversation.

The Greeks taught Oratory. So do GPB. We ask our clients to read out short phrases from a script punctuated by silence. Engaging the audience at the end of each phrase makes you look as if you really are speaking with conviction and intent. Then we offer a more fluid style of longer phrases but again ending up eyeballing the audience.

With a bit of practice the benefits become clear:

- The speaker comes over with conviction
- The audience feels engaged
- The speaker says what he/she means to say, and on time
- The audience's chances of remembering key messages improve significantly

It is easier to learn these skills by coaching rather than reading articles. The oratory technique is simple enough in theory: Look at your script, memorise a short phrase, speak the phrase and then engage at the end. It feels unnatural but with practice you will look as if you are having a thoughtful conversation with the audience.

The key is first to write for the human ear, which finds long sentences hard to process. Script reading has its place - obviously for top business people; but for the rest of us it may be a key conference speech or a talk to analysts where accuracy is vital and where we want to address the audience with vigour and conviction.

Alastair Grant



Do you shoot from the *hip*?

All too often we read in the newspapers about a plc Director who answered a question so badly that their share price fell or they lost a client/customer, remember Gerald Ratner?

This is a sad reflection of the often lengthy time spent coaching a speaker for a presentation compared with little practical skill in answering tough

questions. In reality questions can only be prepared for in the most general terms. Company spokespersons often answer questions before they are ready to speak, because of a Western educational system that encourages rapid responses to questions (the problem is smaller in the East), a feeling that a quick response is somehow better, and distortion of time due to nerves.

So here are our top tips for the practical skills of handling questions:

- Pause in a relaxed way before answering questions. This will give you the only real time to think up the best answer, show courtesy to the questioner, and to some extent disguise the tougher questions – all good things. The pause does not show hesitancy unless it is very long, and under pressure it will feel much longer than it is. Silence is much better than grunts such as ‘well’, ‘umm’, ‘err’, or ‘that’s a good question’ (it generally is a tougher one rather than a better one). Hasty answering is rude, does not allow thinking time, and is where we get the expression ‘shooting from the hip’.
- Be ready at the start of your answer to ask for clarification, to paraphrase the question (a neat trick as you can soften or generalise the question), or correct errors of fact, but politely.
- Please “Don’t be a politician, Answer the Question!” – that is, where you can do and want to. Do it concisely, without skirting around the truth. A good start here is to use key words from the question, then give a reason if desirable. E.g. “Why did your division’s profits rise by 20% last year?”
- Answer: “Our profits were up 20% last year.....(reason).....”.
- Be prepared to stand your ground and keep confidentiality (make a brick wall), and rather than the naff and rather guilty-sounding “No comment”, tell us why you can’t answer and try to say something else instead, “I can’t comment on that because it’s confidential / sub judice, but what I can say is...”, having agreed how much you will reveal beforehand with your management team and PR firm.
- If you don’t know, say so, and either pass the question to a colleague who can answer (warn them of this first), or promise to get an answer to the questioner soon. No one knows the answer to all questions. If you think you should know an answer but don’t, then make it clear that you are giving an estimate or a wide enough range that the real answer is within it!
- When answering all questions, especially negative ones, try to “Bridge” to a positive and upbeat ending, perhaps linking your answers to a relevant key message.

The key point is that most people are much more themselves when answering questions, but have little practical training in the art and skill of question-handling, unless of

course they are politicians.....where even though they can answer well, they choose not to!

Ewan Pearson



The Industrial Society Open Course Dates

As many of you know, we run courses in co-operation with The Industrial Society. These courses are a good opportunity for individuals who need coaching and would benefit from being in a group with people outside their organisation.

Advanced Presentation Skills

This senior level workshop is designed to help participants hone and improve their style and method of presentation. There will be practical sessions using video throughout the two days with constructive assessment and feedback, followed by an on-line 'Virtual Refresher' after the course.

Dates: August 1-2,
September 11-12,
October 4-5, November 1-2
and 15-16, December 3-4

Pitching to Win

This senior level course is designed to help participants to win more of the business pitches they do – a higher 'hit rate' so that their organisations generate increased revenues.

Dates: September 26-28,
November 5-7

**Please call us on 020 8334
5755 for further information
or to book someone on a
course.**

Can you speak Eyak?

No it's not some regional accent from Scunthorpe or Bradford, it is the language spoken by Marie Smith 83, of Anchorage, Alaska. She is the only person in the world who still speaks Eyak, an Alaskan language, so thankfully and sadly she also speaks English; otherwise she would do a lot of talking to herself.

According to The Worldwatch Institute - the global trends observer - in their May/June magazine, about 3,400 or half of the world's 6,800 languages are threatened with extinction. Eyak is the most severe case, but Arikapu in Amazon (6 speakers) and Udihe in Siberia

(c. 100 speakers) are also doomed. UNESCO estimates that about 100,000 speakers are needed to ensure a language is passed down the generations, and the Institute believes that the 3,400 threatened languages each have under 2,500 speakers. Even Maori is threatened, the language that brought us "Kia ora" ("hello") and the haka (a more unusual sort of 'hello'), as is the Cornish language, with such emotive phrases such as "Me na vyn cows Sawsnak!" (I will not speak English). Manx in the Isle of Man disappeared in 1974 with the death of its last speaker. The grim forecasts of 3,400 to 6,120 language extinctions by 2100 will only be slowed if government bans on

languages are lifted (there are no bans in the UK), and children are encouraged to speak their local language. At least Ffyon Hague and Gordon Brown need not fear for their nation's mother tongues – apparently Welsh and Gaelic are thriving.

However, some people (not me) may argue that the culling of these languages would be a good thing! After all, wouldn't it make communication much easier if we all spoke the same language?

What's your view?

You can email me at e.pearson@gpbuk.com

Ewan Pearson

GPB Consulting: Our Services

We are a leading European Consultancy with Associates around the world. We specialise in the spoken communication areas of presentation, selling, negotiation, media and telephone skills. Our principle focus is assisting top to middle management in these areas.

We offer our advice both as consultants on important business issues, and as trainers in general skills development.

We work both one to one with top management and with group workshops for middle management.

Workshops run for between one and five days, and are tailored to each client's requirements.

Our philosophy is simple: "For you to be yourself at your best, even in the toughest situations".



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