

Can you spot a fake smile?



Beth Saunders

In business today facial expressions are becoming increasingly important in business communication. Facial expressions provide information on truthfulness including the leakage of concealed emotions and clues as to whether the information portrayed is false. The face is the site for major sensory inputs and major communicative outputs. Ekman (1979) claims the face is a multisignal, multimessage response system capable of tremendous flexibility and specificity. Freud (1905) studied this area of psychology and concluded:

"He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent he chatters with his fingertips, betrayal oozes out of him at every pore."

... use non-verbal cues

strategically (especially in business) to influence and persuade other's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

Psychologists have studied human behaviour for over a century with a vast amount of research focusing on non-verbal communication and emotions. As Freud suggested, people tend to make a special effort to control facial cues in deception. However, with so much of their attention diverted to facial cues, other channels of non-verbal communication are subsequently neglected and left unguarded (e.g fist clenching, swinging legs and twitching). Although the majority of non-verbal communication is automatic we do have some control and awareness. This enables us to use non-verbal cues strategically (especially in business) to influence and persuade other's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

The study of facial expressions focuses on the way in which different facial expressions communicate emotions. Early studies suggest there

are a small number of universal emotions each with specific universal facial expressions (Darwin, 1872).

Ekman (1979) proposed six basic emotions: anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness and surprise. Each basic emotion has distinctive patterns of facial muscle activity, e.g. surprise is associated with raised eyebrows, dropped jaw, horizontal wrinkles across the forehead (orbis frontalis muscle), raised upper eyelid, and lowered lower eyelid (Ekman & Friesen, 1975).

Psychologists have studied smiles and found that even though fake smiles often look very similar to genuine smiles there are slight differences as they are brought about by different muscles, controlled by different regions of the brain. Fake smiles can be performed at will. Signals are created by the conscious area of the brain, which trigger the major muscles (zygomastics) in the cheek to contract. At the same time muscles pull the corners of the mouth outwards.

In contrast, genuine smiles are generated by the subconscious brain, so are automatic. When an individual experiences pleasure, signals pass rapidly through the amygdala (a region of the brain responsible for processing emotions). Muscles that raise the cheeks (orbicularis oculi) contract making the eyes crease up and the eyebrows dip slightly. In every true smile the corners of the mouth curve upward and the outer corners of the eye crinkle into crow's feet.

In some intense fake smiles lines do appear around the eyes and the cheeks rise, making it look as if the eyes are contracting as a result of a genuine smile. However there are signs that distinguish these fake smiles from genuine. In genuine smiles the eye cover fold (the fleshy part of the eye between the eyebrow and lid) moves downwards and the end of the eyebrow dips slightly.

For a more detailed insight on fake and genuine smiles log onto www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/mind/surveys/smiles/index.shtml where you can test your knowledge and see if you can spot a fake!

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Facial expressions are of paramount importance in business today. Beth Saunders explains how to distinguish between fake and genuine smiles.

Can you tilt a playing field?

Ewan Pearson explains the two important concepts of pitching; 'pre-pitch contact' and the 'ladder of contacts'. These are designed to help you maximise your chances of winning a business pitch.

Tips from the top

James McBrien has asked some leading presenters for their personal tips and advice to 'raise your game' when public speaking.

Can you tilt a playing field?

Ewan Pearson

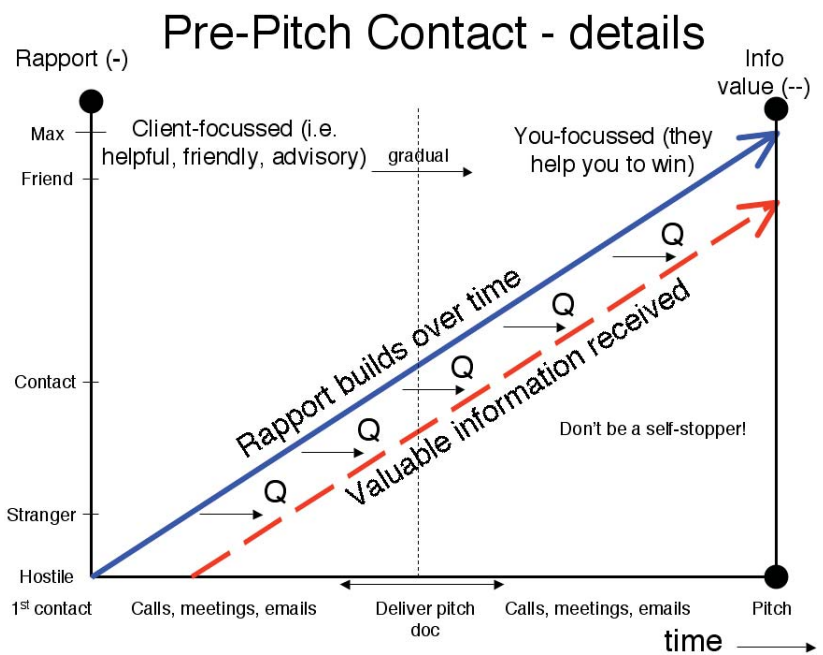


Pitching is not a fair business. Competitors are not equal, but they are close. Some have an advantage going into a pitch presentation, and that head start can prove decisive. So how can you get to that point?

Before we get stuck in, I'll admit that, read the wrong way, the tips covered here can appear a bit too 'commercial'. They're not. They simply recognise two things: One, friends help each other; Two, you can be sure your competition is doing similar things to get ahead, so unless you neutralise or beat their efforts, you start behind the line on pitch day. Here are two of our more persuasive concepts.

On the diagram below you'll see a time line from first moment of contact to the final pitch. This time period can be short or long, 24 hours to 18 months. However long it is, you use this time to get to know your client, building rapport and as a result gaining more and more valuable information. Rapport building is a sophisticated skill, which we'll cover at a later date, but for now it can mean "to make friends". It's possible your client has never met you before, they may even start suspicious of you. So you have to start by being helpful, a phase we call "client focused". There are many things you can do to help them - education, information delivery and sensible questioning. This last one turns out to help both sides. I don't think any client would object to the question 'What would you most like us to focus on at the pitch?' and by the same token 'What do you NOT want us to cover?'. It will show them that you have their interests at heart and will allow you to start to build your pitch content.

You can create a substantial list of such questions which start easy, with relatively low value. As rapport builds, you can ask more difficult questions which have more valuable answers, and are more 'you' focused. I have even known a client to tell me what competitor's pitches were going to be, and their price quotes! We reticent Brits often stop this questioning process too soon. Our advice would be to keep going until the client has their first mildly negative reaction to the information flow, then stop. We don't want you to damage rapport!

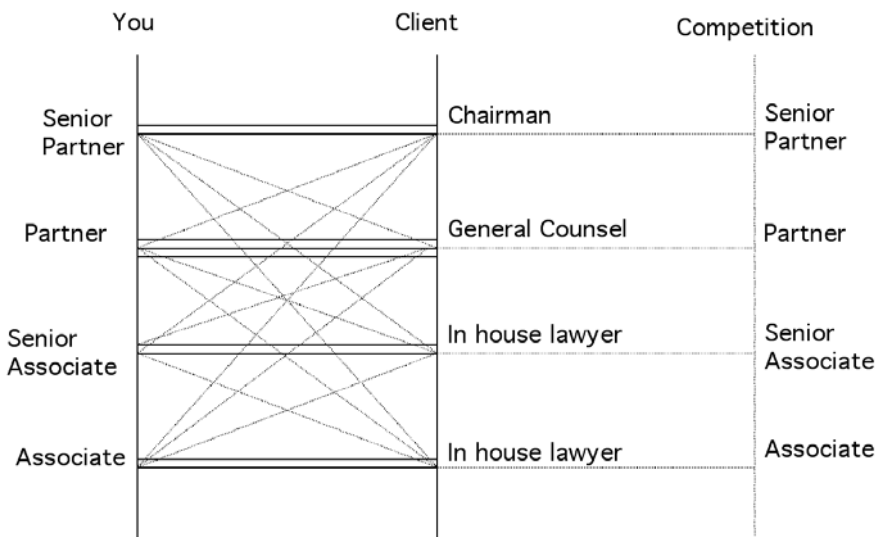


Our second pre-pitch concept is the 'Ladder of Contacts'. There is a risk of unreliability if you have only one client contact point. It also limits your ability to build rapport with others of influence. So we advise pitch teams to build rapport at many levels. Typically these are at equivalent levels in the supplier and client (the horizontal lines) but they can also go diagonally, especially if the client is already known to you.

Information flows both ways, and multiple rapport is built. All information can be cross-checked, so eliminating errors. In one real case, the client's Chairman was said to support Arsenal F.C. Another source said Chelsea, so we crossed-checked and confirmed Chelsea. This came in handy, as the weekend before the pitch, Chelsea beat Arsenal!

In case you think this all a bit time-consuming, pause a moment to consider what your competition will be doing. They too are trying to build multiple rapport, so your efforts will be time well spent.

The Ladder of Contacts



Try to have double or even triple bonds at several levels



New Voices at Grant Pearson Brown Consulting

We are pleased to welcome Beth Saunders to the Grant Pearson Brown core team at Great Queen Street. Beth joined in December '03 and recently graduated with BSc Hons in Psychology from the University of Liverpool. She is responsible for the smooth running of the office. Prior to joining us Beth spent six months working in the USA. Beth is also a fully certified lifeguard and first aider. She is an experienced swimmer and enjoys training several times a week.

Sarah Cottam has been promoted to the role of consultant. With several years at Grant Pearson Brown, Sarah has extensive knowledge of our skills and services and knows many of our clients and their requirements. With an active involvement in local theatre, Sarah never shies from the challenges of retaining an audience's attention.



New Consultant, Sarah Cottam

Tips from the top



James McBrien

As part of our research into what goes into the performance of a top speaker, we have asked some leading presenters to share with us personal angles or tips to 'raise your game' when speaking in public.

I speak to audiences of successful business people and use my lectures to highlight the following things: Leadership, humility, lessons from history, but above all PASSION. In my delivery, I focus carefully on the construction of the lecture, with a clearly defined beginning, body and end, and with all the little sub-plots that excite the intelligence and the imagination of the listener.

David Rattray
Motivational Speaker and Authority on
Anglo-Zulu War

One of the most important considerations when addressing a crowd is to be interested in what you're saying. Sounds simple, but if YOU don't sound like you're excited by what you've got to say, you can't expect your audience to be remotely attentive. A common failing by people speaking on a serious subject, is to become portentous and "heavy". You don't lose your authority by coming across as warm, engaging and enthusiastic; the truth is, you actually win over your audience!

Wendy Lloyd
TV and Radio Presenter

So, in summary, remember to keep it simple, engage and enthuse about your subject. Above all enjoy it.

I can recommend a very simple list of basic "Do's" – and they do work.

1. Make sure of a thorough knowledge of the subject.
2. Keep the presentation as simple as possible: For instance, unless vital, don't use complicated percentages – everyone can visualise 25% but 7.34% could lose the attention of the audience as they try to work it out.
3. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" if a very complicated question arises from the audience, but follow that by "but I'll find out and let you know".
4. Don't assume everyone will know 'Corporate Speak' or what initials stand for – spell them out.
5. Always leave enough time for "questions & answers".

Allan Hargreaves
TV & Radio Presenter/Reporter

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: Apr 29-30, July 8-9, Oct 28-29

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.