

If only Jeremy Clarkson wrote about pauses...

Ewan Pearson

Well he hasn't, so you've got me. When we suggested he be paid the standard 25p per article that we pay, he went all green, dived under the bonnet of a Maserati and started muttering about brake horse power. So here goes. There are five types of pauses in most people's presentations. You may agree after reading our short description below that maybe five is too many. Here they are:

1. The 'Don't Panic Pause' whilst you stare worriedly at your notes or screen wondering what on earth you should say next, often accompanied by an 'umm', 'ahhh' or 'err' sound, or even two or more of these valuable additions to the air traffic.
2. The silently 'Considered Pause' just after that 'don't panic, and the 'oh yes I remember now' thoughts, when you figure out in your mind what is the best way to say the point you know you want to make. Martin Luther King was a great exponent of this pause.



3. The 'Dramatic Pause', delivered mid-way through a phrase. It creates anticipation of what will follow by making people wait and try to guess the next bit. This, unlike a couple of the other pauses here, is done deliberately, and for effect. Think how Churchill spoke, and you'll get the point.
4. The rather loud 'Oops Pause', usually mid-phrase, also often accompanied by one or more 'umm',

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



ahhh' or 'err' sounds, whilst you try to figure out what the next bit of your point is or was going to be, or how to get the next bit out properly, or finish the point off in some sort of coherent way.

5. The gloriously final and silent 'I've done it! Pause' after speaking, whilst you collect the adulation of an audience appreciative of the wisdom you have just imparted. This is usually done staring at the floor/notes/screen, but in a Master Of Pauses (MOP) degree course, it would be done with eye contact that just underlines how confident and engaging the person who has just spoken is, and not in a hurry to get finished or to the next event. This is the pause that we usually label the 'got that?' pause, as its purpose is really to engage the audience to respond, preferably with a 'noddie' or an 'uh-huh', to give the speaker some interactive feedback.

As you travel between Christmas 'Winterval' parties and occasionally pop in to an office or conference centre, you may be lucky enough to sit through a presentation. These are ideal opportunities to catch up on some research, not just into the colour of the inside of your eyelids, but into the quality of a presenter's pauses. That's much more fun.

On your travels, what are you likely to see and hear? Well, probably plenty of number ones and fours, but I'd be impressed if you heard any number twos, threes or fives. And that's not just because you can't really 'hear' a silence, (oh yes you can), but because most presenters don't do them in the first place. And yet they are the only ones that should be there.

So here's something to add to your News Year's resolutions about exercise (more), drinking (less), and work:life imbalance (if only it 'balanced', it would be fine); our resolutions on when and how you should and should not pause when presenting. And unlike all the other well-meaning resolutions,

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Ewan Pearson (and not Jeremy Clarkson) tells us about 5 types of pause, some good, some bad, and which is which. So (pause) you can have a go over Christmas and get some good resolutions going for 2007.

Melody on monotony

Sarah Cottam has a brainwave and takes us through the routine of how to turn your voice into a musical instrument that people will actually want to hear, and not the sort that sounds as though it wants you to have a quick kip.

Stop at the lights for a perfect 10

Alastair Grant reveals a dark corporate secret. We cheat when coaching clients using a checklist with traffic lights. Go green or rage red when you read and use our scorecard for giving quick helpful feedback on your own or others' presentations.

Like you like me. It's NLP

Tim Farish explores the mental factors that are important in building rapport as well as giving tips which will help you be more 'in sync' with someone.

If only Jeremy Clarkson wrote about pauses...

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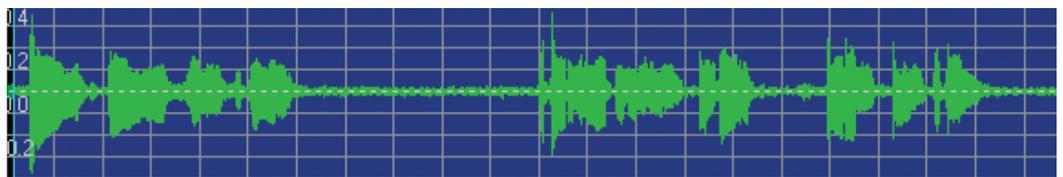
do try to keep them up beyond week three.

Step one: Get on 'better-than-acquaintance' terms with your material. No need (and a bad idea) to learn it off by heart, but get to the stage where you know the overall structure and sequence, so that at any time you know what is coming next. Even if it is on the next slide.

Step two: Buy in to the idea that pauses are not only acceptable, but a really good idea. Even better, buy in that silent ones are better than the regulation umm/err/ahh routine.

Step three: Go for it! No, really, do some silent pausing before speaking. It's a good idea to exaggerate in practice mode, so have a go at counting to two before setting off down Speech Alley. You'll feel good, and you will look as though you are thinking courteously about what you're saying to the audience.

Step four: Try out some monster Churchillian pauses for effect, mid-idea. Deliberate ones mind you, nothing by accident. Here's an example, a 2.5



From Martin Luther King's famous speech

second pause from the start of Martin Luther King's famous 'I have a dream' speech in 1963.

Step five: (maybe phase this in over the spring), go for some silent pauses, with eye contact, after speaking. Not a glare or stare, or all at one person, but engage your whole audience in the message you have just so eloquently spouted forth, by giving them time to think about the message as you look among them, before you charge headlong into the next magnetic moment of content distribution. This might stretch to a whole two seconds, when you get good at it. Again, it's worth exaggerating this in practice mode. Not only did you and they get time to think, but once more you will appear confident, not rushing in panic to the next point.

That will get you through to summer, by which time I am sure that you like the audience will be ready for the next holiday which, given our predilection for inventing new words where not necessary, will by then probably be called something like 'summerval', and involve a very considerable pause, of a sixth kind, involving sun cream, salads and

Advice squeezed straight from the experts



Monotony to melody: a brainwave



Sarah Cottam

I had the pleasure of sitting in one of those presentations the other day, you know the ones, where one minute you're listening and the next you're waking up to the sudden sound of shuffling chairs and people leaving the auditorium. And before you ask, no, I hadn't had a late boozy night the night before. It was purely the wondrous magic of monotony!

What always fascinates me is that often this style of presenting afflicts the nicest of people who normally have the most natural melodic voices. So what happens to strip these people of their natural talents?

Well, the answer lies in the depths of our brains and the instructions that we send to our vocal organs. This is a complex process, so let's keep to a surface level explanation: Imagine that you are

speaking to one other person. The first thing you do is to think and decide what you want to say (message: the words, phrases and their ordering) and how you want to say it so as to have a given effect on the other person (emotional involvement: stress and intonation of the voice). You then send all of this in a whole host of complex instructions through the nerves to the vocal organs (lungs, vocal cords, tongue and lips). These react as instructed and produce sound waves sent to the listener for them to interpret. Easy. We don't even notice that we are doing it.

Now, let's look at that 'given effect on the other person' part in more detail. Take the example of the word: 'Fire'. Shouting 'Fire' in a conference hall is very different to shouting it on a shooting range or saying it as a question in a living room in winter.

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Monotony to melody: a brainwave

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This is just one word, but it's said with different stress and intonation depending on the effect that the speaker wants to achieve. Here lies the route of the monotony problem.

The monotonous speaker only considers the information that they have to impart, not the effect that they want to have on their audience. They process only one set of messages: the words, phrases and order. No specific messages are processed for stress and intonation. Hence the monotony.

So what to do about it? Well, the obvious point is to think of your audience and the effect that you want to have on them. Here are some areas to work on:

Practice beforehand:

1. Find a quiet room where no one can overhear or disturb you
2. Present some of your presentation out loud in a really monotonous voice
3. Then try it again but this time going completely over the top with expression. Imagine you are presenting to excited children. Move around and use your hands to paint the melody in the air (you really need a room where no one can see you!)
4. Finally try it again normally, thinking of the effect that you wish to achieve and listening to the way it sounds, making adjustments as you go.

Emotional involvement:

1. If you are going to say something like: 'I'm really excited about this project' you need to sound as if you are really excited. This emotional involvement is important for prosody (the patterns of stress and intonation in the voice) and therefore persuasion
2. Practice saying sentences like: 'I've just won the lottery' or 'I'm stuck on the M25' or any other emotive sentences
3. First, say the sentence out loud as you would if you were ecstatically happy, then extremely sad, and finally as really angry
4. Listen to the changes in your voice. As you do so, are you faster/slower, louder/quieter, and prosodic/monotonous?
5. Then pick the emotive phrases in your presentation and practice saying them with the emotional involvement that they require.

Restructure your content:

It may be that the actual content of the presentation needs addressing more than the voice. So:

1. Start with a blank sheet of paper and write down the effect that you want to have on the audience

2. Then check your presentation: Does it achieve this goal?
3. If not, why not? How can you bring the subject to life? Think of stories, analogies, case studies, pictures etc. These bring relevancy to you and your audience and are easier to present with emotional involvement than facts and figures.

Get the right mind set:

1. Just before going up to present, you need to get your mind right. Like a pre-match pep talk, encourage yourself to perform at your best
2. At the start of the presentation, pull out all the stops. You can relax as you go on, as long as you keep your audience at the forefront of your mind.

The audience is the key:

1. Treat the audience as one individual that you are in conversation with
2. Talk to them in a conversational tone: short sentences, pausing to allow them to digest, everyday language, varying pace etc
3. Look them in the face, not over their heads, to read their expressions and body language. Adjust your content and voice to make sure that you are engaging them throughout. You may even want to get them involved in the conversation by asking them either rhetorical or real questions which you can then answer.

Of course, you may decide that this really isn't such a big deal. So what if you have a monotonous delivery style? The content is all that really matters. Unfortunately though, a good presentation can't have one without the other. And as the voice is the medium for delivering the content, without a



stimulating voice, there is soon no content as all that is heard is something equivalent to white noise..... or snoring.

On the other hand, as the monotonous delivery is important in hypnotism, by learning all the other hypnotist's skills, you could deliver the content subconsciously and at the same time have fun by making your audience think that they are all chickens!

The choice is yours.

Advice squeezed straight from the experts



The Perfect 10



Alastair Grant

In the world of presenting we coach and advise in matters of delivery, content, team dynamics and handling questions. We think hard about how to measure the performance of those we rehearse, so thought we would let you have a bit of a cheat's '10-point checklist' for those occasions when you have to rehearse and advise colleagues on their presentations.

Actually it's no cheat! We use it ourselves when time is short and there's a lot to cover. We have for your convenience put the checklist on its own page so you can use, copy or print it for use as you wish. This checklist could also be used as an aide-memoir if you are the speaker, so we hope it is helpful to all our readers. This particular checklist is firmly about measuring only 'style', or our term 'delivery performance', and not content (which we'll do in the next newsletter).

It's actually not easy to measure performance properly as it's largely a subjective exercise. But in big picture terms we know that audiences are persuaded by two things: The strength of the content's key messages, and the delivery performance of the presenter. The press have of late been re-using the old terms 'substance' and 'style', which match up pretty closely to our measures. David Cameron has been criticised for being a triumph of style over substance – Blair likewise recently. It's suggested that Gordon Brown is more likely to be the other way around. Clement Attlee, who succeeded Churchill as PM, was definitely a substance man – indeed it's said he 'did not care' about style.

So here we are measuring delivery or style. The sketch writers in the media do something similar – often with wicked and admirable accuracy using colourful metaphor and analogy. The difference is that we are coaching people to be themselves at their very best, which includes not being distracting or hard to understand (e.g. very strong accents or speaking over the speed limit).

Our checklist is written in shorthand. The 10 points do not have the same weighting; I would list the first four as being most important in enhancing the delivery and making the messages easier to absorb. It is also very hard and not necessarily important to get all ten points right!

You can find on the web (e.g. Youtube) archival film of Churchill speaking. Clearly he scores very high marks yet his eye contact is often minimal when he reads from script. This really didn't matter so much as his was a more auditory age. For us the 10-point



system is also a reminder that someone may be underperforming, but it is hard to know why. For example they may be pausing well, and holding good eye contact, yet something is flat. Our traffic light system allows us to get a first but good impression. You could fill it in as the person is speaking, then debrief in a more objective way afterwards. Do let us know if anyone gets the perfect 10!

The Perfect 10

Traffic lights: GPB's presentation coaching 10-point checklist

	Point*	What goes wrong	What goes right	Red, Yellow or Green?
1	Pauses	Auto-speak – a continuous flow of information so no time to digest the message	A series of correct thinking and absorption pauses allows the audience to keep up. The pauses also enhance conviction and engagement.	
2	Eye Contact	Eyes contact is random and/or dismissive	The eyes engage and seek attention and/or a response	
3	Vocal Expression	Boring, lacking emotion Phrases end up-pitch showing uncertainty	Good modulation and intonation lifts performance	
4	Body Language	Lack of positive emotion Negative emotional leakage	Positive body language reinforces and enhances the message	
5	Pace	Speaker talks at a uniform or slow pace or gabbles too fast	The pace is varied from spirited to slower for emphasis	
6	Volume	'long distance voice' or volume constant so no stress variation	Varied volume as in conversation. Key words are emphasised	
7	Articulation	Words are run together e.g. 'knowhadimean?'	Each word is complete – foreigners would understand	
8	Fluency	Lots of hesitations and filler noises and words e.g. umm / ahh / kind of	Few excess words or filler noises. Confident, conviction, fluent	
9	Word selection	Latinate, ponderous and/or passive words	Anglo-Saxon, crisp and active words	
10	Prompts	Poor use of script/notes/ PowerPoint/adlib	Good use of prompts improves many of the items listed above	

* See also our other articles on these topics.

Advice squeezed straight from the experts



Like you like me: How can you create rapport?



Tim Farish

Have you ever met someone and just got on so well it's as if you'd known them for ages? Well, it was probably because you had exceptional rapport with them.

Rapport is one of the most important features of subconscious human interaction and plays a big role in how we influence, pitch and sell to others. It comes from the French word 'rapporter' meaning to be in 'sync', or on the same wavelength as another person. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) has built on this idea to create some physical factors that can help people create rapport. These factors include matching someone's voice patterns and body language so that the feeling of 'similarity' is enhanced. According to NLP, this is because people like others who are like themselves.

I will cover NLP and its physical factors in later articles but I would like to begin with the mental factors that help create rapport. Here's an analogy to illustrate this.

If creating rapport was similar to building a house then being 'curious' would be the foundations. This means actively being interested in the person you are talking to. Simon Cowell, yes he of 'The X-Factor' fame, claimed that the secret to his early success was imagining a sign above people's heads that said 'MAKE ME FEEL IMPORTANT!' The key psychological point here is that if a person feels focussed upon they tend to feel more special. Whether we like to admit it or not, given the chance we all love talking about ourselves. The irony is that most of us are so good at talking about ourselves that we fail to involve the other person. It takes maturity, concentration and an ability to listen well, but most of all it takes a desire to find out or be 'curious'.

Continuing the house-building analogy, on top of the foundations are the walls which, in the case of rapport, would mean changing your 'timeframe' when you talk with someone. Let me explain. Where most of us meet lots of people on a typical day, very few of us are prepared to treat everyone as a potential friend. It's easier and more practical to treat most people in a transient manner. Regardless of how transient the meeting, if you

imagine that you are building a long-term relationship with someone, your interactions with that person will be more considered. Imagining a future relationship allows you to create better rapport with that person.



Once the walls are built then it is time for the roof to be constructed. In rapport terms, this means being able to 'co-create' when you are with someone. Some of you will remember my article on how to negotiate creatively where I showed the powerful effect of starting a negotiation from the point of 'what can we create together?' as opposed to the antagonistic approach of 'what can I get out of this?' The same rule applies in creating rapport. By looking at your interactions with others as an opportunity to create possibilities together, you will value, trust and respect that person in a way that will excite them. And yourself.

In the next article I will look at the physical factors that help to create rapport. Now that the house has been built it will need to be furnished and decorated and that is where the physical factors come in. Now, anyone know the number of a good removals firm?

To summarise:

1. Be curious
2. Increase your timeframe
3. Treat everyone as a possible friend
4. Co-create with others

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.