



*Happy New Year
from everyone at
Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd*



Ewan Pearson

Three dimensional emphasis

One thing that makes a good voice stand out from an average voice is in how the speaker uses their voice to give emphasis to the content they are presenting. When you hear it, it's natural but powerful. So what ARE they doing differently?

We have over the past decade conducted many hundreds of voice analyses, either detailed or the quicker short version, for our clients. In each case the resulting scientific report gives us measurements of various - usually 6 or 8 - parameters in their voice, and we use this data to inform our coaching of the vast bulk of our senior clients. These people are the key communicators for their business, so having a good voice is a necessity not an optional extra.

Several of these 6-8 parameters are relevant to vocal emphasis, so we can see clearly from measurements how the voice is (or is not) being used for this all-important indicator of importance.

The three most significant parameters for emphasis are:

1. Pitch changes, usually up
2. Volume changes, usually louder
3. Pace changes, usually slower

These form the basis of the changes that we humans make to add or remove emphasis in the voice.

The key thing here is that emphasis

comes from a **change** in the voice at a specific moment, either at the start of a word, or in the middle of a word.

Emphasis cannot be applied to every syllable or word in a phrase because emphasis varies; the change is what signals it, and you cannot emphasise everything. Or if you do, you sound ridiculous. And probably rude.

These three changes are in a sense **dimensions**, as they can all be used to varying degrees and each is independent of the other.

They are used by different people in varying ways, and what we usually find is that those who are one-dimensional do not sound as good as those who use two dimensions, who do not sound as good as those who use all three dimensions. Stephen Fry is a good example of someone who uses all dimensions in a rich blend; former Prime Minister Gordon Brown is a good example of a one-dimensional speaker, as he typically used mainly volume for emphasis.

(Continued on page #)

In this edition:

Three dimensional emphasis
By Ewan Pearson
Ewan shares how to be emphatic in a natural way, to add to gravitas.

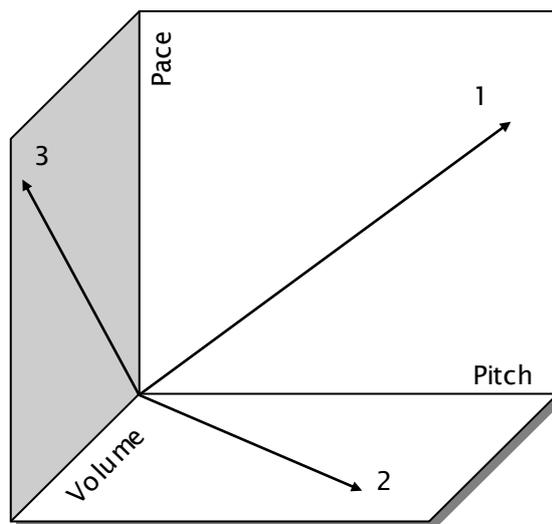
It takes practice to practise
By Lynda Russell-Whitaker
Lynda suggests how to develop the good habit of practicing.

How to make messages stick: use of "stickies" and Daisy
By Alastair Grant
Alastair reviews some of our key advice on how to make messages more memorable using some strange words.

Three dimensional emphasis ... continued

This habit of Gordon Brown's tended to make him sound unfriendly or aggressive, and it even has a name in scientific circles, the 'vocal punch'.

Here's a diagram to show these dimensions; the arrows show changes made in two of the three dimensions of emphasis, which is the most common change:



Number 1 shows the combination change of raising pitch and slowing pace.

Number 2 shows a combination change of raising pitch and increasing volume.

Number 3 shows a combination change of increasing volume and slowing pace.

It's rather hard to show a fourth line sticking out from the page, so we haven't, but you get the idea. This would be the line for someone using all three changes - a rise in pitch, a slowing of pace and an increase in volume. That would be the best, and richest sounding combination.

Then there is the distance travelled long each line. Most people that we have coached start by being rather timid in how big a change they will make, but the result is that their attempts to be emphatic are ineffective. Instead they sound rather 'samey' all along. This is not to blame them, they usually have never had a voice coaching session before and it has never been a limiting factor in their job. But once they get to the dizzy altitude of

the C Suite, it's a wholly different matter. The good news is that all this is quite easy to train someone to improve. Yes it requires work, but some simple exercises, usually using their own script or a famous speaker, works quickly and effectively.

If you're going to 'try this at home' (and you can/should, whatever level of speaker you are!), then also use a digital sound recorder (all smart phones have them these days), so that you can concentrate on the sound you're making when speaking and can review the effect afterwards.

Have a go at each of the numbered alternatives from the 3D diagram, using the same piece of script, then replay them one after the other. You are probably not the best judge of what sounds best, so it is time to enrol a family member or friend. To make things fair, get them to have a go too.

Once the laughing at how you sound is past, reflect on what you've just done: consciously you have grabbed your voice by the throat (literally!) and taken some grown-up steps to developing a better voice.

This though is a conscious effort, and was probably quite hard work. It will need practice to develop a sound that is natural and effective and sustainable for you.

So now all you need to do is to read Lynda's article which follows, in order to develop and then perfect a better voice.

Ewan Pearson

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts



It takes practice to practise



“Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good.”

From Malcolm Gladwell, 'Outliers: The Story of Success'

The title of this article might seem like stating the obvious, but the fact is it does actually take practice to practise. As the quote by best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell suggests, it is the doing of something over and over again that hones our skills to the point of excellence.

All habits, whether good or bad, take a while to be really embedded, so we need to be patient with ourselves. Most of us won't remember just how long it took to form the teeth brushing habit twice a day - probably by constant nagging for months by one or both parents!

Yet it's very important to develop new, positive habits and practises as well as discard old, often outmoded ones.



Brushing one's teeth takes practice.....

This applies to many aspects of our lives, of course, but I want to turn your attention to the practice of preparing and rehearsing for a key presentation; I'm including speeches and pitches in this more general term.

How much time do you usually devote to this? Be honest! Several people I've spoken to recently confess that they devote very little time to practising their pitch; to the extent that some rehearse their pitch in the cab journey on the way to the client. Not really the best way to win.

Often people bemoan the shortage of time to prepare and rehearse for pitches or

presentations, and yet most of us will say we want to win that piece of business. If it's for a presentation, it could be an important marketing or PR exercise at a high profile event filled with people you'd be happy to have as clients.

So why on earth would you leave the success of your talk so much to chance?

To be fair, there are some people who need little or no preparation. This is either because they have been speaking in public for so many years that they are very practised at it, or because they know their subject matter extremely well and prefer to be spontaneous when talking on the subject.

Conversely, there are those people who give terrible presentations due to debilitating nerves.

The vast majority of presentations and speeches that I witness in the UK, however, are simply dull. Fundamental errors include: too much information on the slides; poorly structured and unbalanced content; bland delivery that includes a monotonous, mumbling voice accompanied by slouching and little or no eye contact with the audience.

Of course, I'm going to recommend working with a coach on a key presentation or pitch! That being said, much improvement can be made with good preparation and a decent amount of rehearsal time.

Once you start to take the time to perfect and practise your talk, ironing out glitches as you go, you'll find that - like brushing your teeth - the habit will form.

Although abridged, here are some suggestions to help form this positive habit:-

(Continued on page 4)



Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts





It takes practice to practise ... continued

Find some peace and quiet for half an hour or more. What are three key points you want the audience to remember? Write these down.

Once you have these points, flesh them out, making sure your content is balanced. Your credentials and credibility are important (ethos) along with any data and knowledge you are imparting (logos).

However, don't forget to inject emotion through your choice of words and delivery (pathos).

Include examples to illustrate and strengthen your points: quotes from experts, anecdotes or short stories all reinforce your points and enable an audience to remember them. Think about how you are going to deliver your presentation and to whom. Ask yourself if your style and content fit well with the audience.



Practice to present, not just to brush teeth

Practise your delivery on your own (without a mirror), or in front of a trusted colleague or friend. Record it on audio.

Listen to it a few times; make notes and revisions where you know it clearly needs work.

If you hear too many 'umms/errs' or fillers such as 'like' or 'at the end of the day', then rehearse until you are more confident with your content and these are reduced substantially.

Also pay attention to your eye contact, facial expressions and hand gestures. Relax. Smile occasionally! Along with pacing, pausing and modulating your voice, this will help to engage your audience.

We often overuse volume for emphasis rather than a change in pitch. Try practising your talk as if it's a children's story to hear the difference.

Make diary entries to review your talk daily or weekly. Spend at least 15 minutes daily if the event is happening that week; 30 minutes weekly if it's happening several weeks or months hence.

I'll leave the last words with Aristotle:

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts



How to make messages stick; use of “Stickies” and Daisy



We argue that if your audience cannot remember your key messages then your presentation has failed. It maybe the listener, if asked to comment, says:

‘Well there was a lot of information but there was no message’

If it's a competitive pitch you are making then this could be the reason for you losing the pitch. Simply put when the competitors are reviewed lack of memorable key points will cause you to be eliminated.

You may have handled the questions well and scored high in other areas but the assessors almost don't want to admit they cannot recall your message, indicating they were not listening. So rather than admitting their failure they simply find a reason to throw you off the list!

Establishing your key points at the outset is an obvious start but the trick then is to make them stick in people's minds. We have introduced the buzzword STICKIES in our workshops to, umm ... well er .. make the idea stick.

So what are Stickies? Stickies are a device to make points more memorable. This could be a brilliant PowerPoint illustration or verbal imagery. And here we introduce *Daisy*

'Daisy' is one step on a conceptual ladder produced by Professor Hayakawa back in the 1960s called the ladder of abstraction. Starting at the bottom of this ladder, we have the simple idea of a black and white cow called 'Daisy'. (Daisy is a typical name for an English cow - in France Marguerite seems the favoured one!).

No doubt you have an image of her in your mind already. Now if you add more Daisies, we have to use a more abstract term - 'Cows' but again the picture in our minds is quite clear. Moving one step higher, we add other types of animals to the group and again have to redefine our term as 'Livestock'. It is at this stage that the images in people's minds begin to differ.

Now, if we add plant, silos and buildings to this picture, we have to become more abstract again and talk about Farm Assets. Moving up to the final level and

completing this picture, the easiest way to describe everything within it is to become extremely abstract and call it a "Wealth Creation Unit". By this stage, everyone's image is different and quite a lot of people lost it completely!

This last expression 'Wealth Creation Unit' is much like the messages we typically hear such as: *"We must be more flexible and proactive"* or, *"We will empower our team"* or, *"Our plan will enhance synergy and motivate our group to be more focused on the bottom line"* or, *"We will produce a standard of customer service better than our customer expects"*

Of course you have to use the abstract words and phrases that pervade your area. You may know them well but you cannot be sure that your audience is able to visualise them as well as you do. So the abstract idea must be reinforced, then and there, with a sticky example. Even if they are well used to the in-house jargon, stickles still help them to remember with greater clarity the point that you are making.

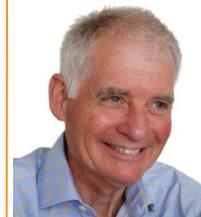
Wealth Creation Unit (WCU)
Farm assets
Livestock
Cows
Daisy

Alastair's "Ladder of Abstraction"

So the trick is to produce a 'Daisy' that the listener can visualise in their minds.

For example, some of you will know my story of the Coke can. It starts like this:

(Continued on page 6)



Alastair Grant

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts





How to make messages stick; use of “Stickies” and Daisy ... continued

“Imagine a Coke can in your hand. It is not very strong - you can flex the sides of the can - what you may not know is that the skin of our aircraft is only 4 times the thickness of this Coke can?”

Once that has happened, the message will sink home and you have achieved one of your main goals - sticky messages that will be remembered.

The story continues from there. You may need to follow this with: “Now what this means to you is” or preceded by “Let me paint this picture ...”



Something of a sticky situation...

Alastair Grant

Our Services

Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd 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, which are unique to GPB. We then provide voice and visual coaching, and content 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 Voice, Visual and Content Analysis, Prospect Relationship Management (PRM) and the Information Iceberg.

Image: This is not really how you want your aircraft skin to look..

Verbal imagery is powerful but PowerPoint, if skilfully used, can be just as effective. A slide showing a graph of the rise in sales of aircraft over 30 years may be easier to remember than a verbal equivalent.

A simple application is make ideas more sticky by mentioning names and places. A *large company makes radar spare parts for an airport* would be much more sticky if it was changed to *'Raytheon, based outside Edinburgh, is making radar spare parts for Heathrow Airport'*



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