



Simon North

Expanding by contracting

Simon North is our guest writer for this Journal. In January 2010 he set up Position Ignition (positionignition.com), a firm that advises people on how to survive and thrive at work in the 21st Century. They focus on the relationship between a worker and their work, throughout that person's life.

Gaining a qualification is hard work, particularly when you thought that you had finished that stage of your life.

Time has become so scarce and you need to commit loads and loads of it to something like this. Gaining a coaching qualification though is a good thing and has become somewhat “de rigueur”.

Such learning can be life affirming and useful for learning about life in general.

There was one particular component of this learning that was valuable to such an extent that I'd have paid my fee (a quite significant fee) for this training just to learn it. This skill is **contracting**. Contracting is a really dull word for what is a really powerful concept that we can all use throughout our lives, not only in the ‘coach-client’ relationship.

Contracting here firstly means the combination of coach and client making a psychological contract with one another based on what they need from, and expect of, each other. The coach needs to get the ‘coachee’ - i.e. the individual they're working with - to identify the outcomes they want from any coaching process. And it is truly measurable.



There is also an intuitive sense that there is something about coaching that would be useful to know. The coaches I have met had been impressive people - not just anyone who called themselves a coach but everyone who was actually a qualified one.

Signing up to, and completing, my coaching programme was a fabulous experience. It's refreshing to look in a new and different way at a subject you're familiar with and to be able to deepen and develop your skills in very specific areas, such as questioning and listening.

For example, the coachee might say, “I want to give good presentations” or “I'd like that appraisal meeting to go just as I want”. They'll be asking: can I do this? Yes or no? They'll also be conscious of target timeframes. Can I do this in three months? Two weeks?

But this act is just as applicable to all forms of business communications and activities.

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The Presentation & Business Development Specialists

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



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Simon suggests that ‘Contracting’ is a powerful tool for all parts of life.

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Ewan describes how to prepare yourselves to Olympic standard.

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Expanding by contracting ... continued

The second objective for the coach is to get the person they're working with to visualise what it should be like when this outcome comes about.

What would a great outcome look like for you and how will you know when you reach that place? In presentations and pitches it's the buzz – the excitement of not just getting an audience inspired but also the sense that they are going to buy or proceed. Again this objective applies throughout our business lives.

There is a third element as well. What contribution would the coachee like from the coach? Now that is one really difficult question to ask. When you think about it, if I were to coach you while you're doing your job, the best use of me is going to depend partly on what you need and partly on what I can bring to you.

As we start to work together you will quickly get to know that I'm capable of doing very good things for you.

That would be central to the contracting discussion at the start of any coach-client relationship, so that both parties can understand more fully how they're going to be working together. It's just as central to any 'contract' between two business parties. Each of these elements complements the other two.

It's clear to me that the main reason why contracting is so powerful for all of us, not just coaches, is that you can use it in so many aspects of your life: work, parenting, relationships, even one-off projects - it does not matter what your situation is.

We all know what it is like to have an objective for a working day, or an agenda for a meeting. The potential usefulness of contracting is related to

the agreed understanding of what great looks like for everyone, the agreement about targets and, critically, what we're going to do once we've met the targets. It is action-orientated.

So whether you're preparing to present to a group of senior professionals or whether you're in the middle of starting a new business, asking these questions in relation to what you want to achieve is going to be very fundamental to the success of whatever it is you're doing.

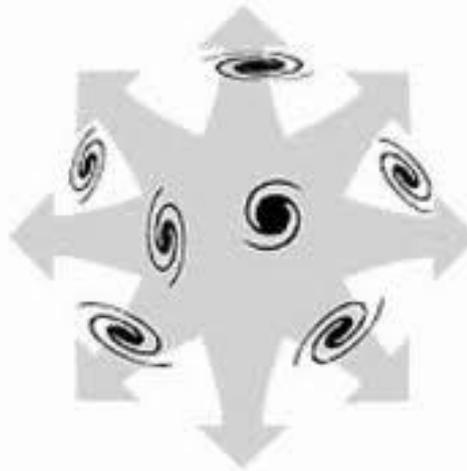
And rather than be overwhelmed by the thought of contracting, you can do it in bite size chunks. Instead of thinking, 'oh no, I've got to climb Everest', you can start small, for example, by saying that by the end of this conference call, or one hour meeting, we need to have covered x, y and z.

This is not about being a coach. As a business developer, I will ask my potential client what they want from me - what do they need to achieve their objectives and move this forward; whatever the situation, whether it's about their presentation, a vital negotiation or a media interview. If you're not a coach, you can still ask these questions.

When I set out to get my own coaching qualification I guess I probably had a very narrow view of what it actually meant to be a coach.

In reality, learning how to become a coach, and gaining the knowledge of contracting particularly, meant a change of approach in every endeavour of my professional life.

Contracting has expanded my abilities greatly, and it can do so for you too.



Advice *squeezed*
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Preparing like an Olympian



This will be our last edition before you and I go off to watch the greatest show on Earth, the London Olympics. So as it is topical, I want to share with you some tips for pitch preparation that I trust would be worthy even of an Olympian.

What are you up to for the 'Games? I am doing volunteer driving. I'll be taking round some senior members from the Olympic committees from among the 205 countries attending, also those from some of the Sports Federation officials from the 26 sports, and perhaps even a few junior IoC members around as a 'T3' driver. I am sure many of you readers are also either volunteers (there are over 70,000 of us) or spectators. I was one of the many here who missed out badly on the first two rounds of ticket sales, but then got them really quite easily in the third round for my own sport, rowing.

As 'Jubilympic' Fever is in town, I thought that this article should be about how to pitch and prepare for winning such major pitches. And to make it more useful, I'll put my tips in a business context.

The staggering thing about these Games is that London has been preparing to host them since 2003. That's NINE years. It started in 2002 when, after a key govt. debate, the British Olympic Association (BoA) decided that as Manchester had set the path with a sighting shot bid for 2008,



London might bid in July 2005 for the 2012 Games. In 2003 the decision to bid was debated and ratified.

I heard about the intention to bid soon afterwards in the press, and immediately wrote to Tessa Jowell (now Dame), then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to offer our services. We won that work without a contest; I think our

competitors had not even started to think about pitching for the work. We worked for nearly a year on the presentations for that campaign, as well as sponsoring the bid in the only way we could, through heavily discounted fees.

First tip: start early and aim to win the pitch before your competition notices.

Of course, whilst *we* could do that, London could not win without a fair, tough and open competition, which is much more likely to be the case for you. London had to follow due IoC process and win at the end of a selection/elimination process. Occasionally the bid deviated from the centre of the road and the team got ticked off, but thankfully London was not eliminated.

The Olympic selection process is very lengthy and expensive (the original bid budget was £15m), with counterparties and constituencies needing to be aligned, approvals obtained, tenders submitted, and presentations given. It is a massive endurance event and not a task for the faint hearted, so...

Second tip: Only bid for work where you have a great chance of winning, AND where your team have the motivation to endure the long hard slog that tendering will be.

Many here thought London was not up to it, and that even included Ken Livingstone, the then Mayor of London.

Once the decision to bid had been taken (it was not initially popular), the GB team had to go into the preparation stages. But there was no 'team', so the first hire was of a bid CEO. This was Barbara Cassani, who was previously CEO of BA's Go subsidiary, and very able as a team builder and fund raiser. She got London off to a great start, hiring good people who would ultimately prove be vital in the campaign. People such as David Magliano, Michael Dalziel and Mike Lee.

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Ewan Pearson

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Preparing like an Olympian continued

Mid-term though it became clear that whilst Barbara was great thus far, she was not the best person to deliver the pitch, and so Seb Coe came in. That change was a key decision in winning the bid.

Third tip: Have the best team and team leader, be prepared to change the team members and even leaders mid way as roles change.

Once you have a team, you can brainstorm *why* you think your team should win.



This is hard to do when you don't know what your competition is going to say, and even harder when you don't know who the competition is! But at least you are all probably in the same position.

We suggest focussing on this 'why' question to begin with by identifying what is special and unique about you, your team, your firm, your bid. It does not rely on what the others might say. It has to be true and it has to be a reason, or better still a set of reasons, why the buyer would choose you. Best of these are USPs, but they have to be truly USPs - unique to you among the competition, and selling points when seen from the buyer's perspective.

I still find it remarkable that's London's powerful message for being chosen was 'to bring children back in to sport'. Who'd have thought of that?! It's not unique and it's not about London. Any of the 5 finalist cities could have said it, only London did.

Why did London go with that message? Because they knew their client. The IoC was (and still is) passionate about health. It's charter even says so: "Olympism is a philosophy of life, which places sport at the service of humankind".

Fourth Tip: Brainstorm your reasons for winning in isolation. Do not get distracted by second-guessing the competition.

Whether or not you know about your

competition, you need to know what makes you different and better-suited to win the work. So work on Points of Parity (PoPs), Points of Difference (PoDs) and doing a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. Now you're ready to build the pitch that goes into the tender document and/or presentation. It's vital they align; you can't change the reasons why you should win after you have sent them off to the client, yet many teams we work with wish they could.

Fifth Tip: Get the messaging right early on, before telling the client, so you don't risk having to squirm around inadequate messages later on.

Most pitches and tenders involve rounds before the final. If I'm candid, London scraped through these earlier rounds, in much the same way that the England football team does (it's too early to know their result for Euro 2012). London were a bit hesitant, made a few mistakes, lacked broad support and got negative feedback. But this process is a stamina event, and they kept on hanging in there.

Sixth Tip: You don't have to win the heats and semi finals, but it helps if you're there or close to it, so aim to do everything you can to properly clear each high jump bar the client sets.

My final tip is that the only race you have to win is the final, so this is where you have to peak. Rehearse, change, rehearse, change again, and rehearse. London's bid team rehearsed three weeks non-stop at a special 'pitch camp'.

How much are YOU prepared to do to have someone like Jacques Rogge and the IoC



Jacques Rogge (Telegraph, 2012)

Advice
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Persuasion - just or unjust



“Was not the very sight of the friend who sat behind you, was not the recollection of what had been, the knowledge of her influence, the indelible, immovable impression of what persuasion had once done - was it not all against me?”

The above quote is spoken passionately by Frederick Wentworth, in the classic novel ‘Persuasion’ by Jane Austen.

Persuasion is not just the name, but is at the heart of Austen’s final novel. Eight years before the story starts, heroine Anne Elliot is happily engaged to naval officer, Frederick Wentworth. She decides to break off the engagement, persuaded by her godmother Lady Russell that he is an unworthy match, nearly spelling disaster for both parties.

According to literary scholar Dame Gillian Beer, Jane Austen was acutely aware that the human quality of persuasion (defined as: to persuade or to be persuaded, rightly or wrongly) is fundamental to the process of human communication.

Indeed, ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ persuasion - of one person rightly or wrongly influencing, or attempting to influence, another - is a recurring theme throughout her novels via various interactions between characters.

Beer also observes that Austen had very profound concerns about the levels and applications of persuasion employed among individuals in her society. This concern extended to her own influence - and intentions - when advising her beloved niece (Fanny Knight) whether or not to accept a particular suitor. The weight of responsibility ensures she offers both sides of the argument in an impassioned letter to Fanny on the subject.

Beer wrote: “Jane Austen cannot avoid the part of persuader, even as dissuader.”

‘That’s all very well,’ you might say, ‘but that was the 19th Century and by and large about people who did not work for a living’. And well you might! However, dear reader, as you and I both know, we

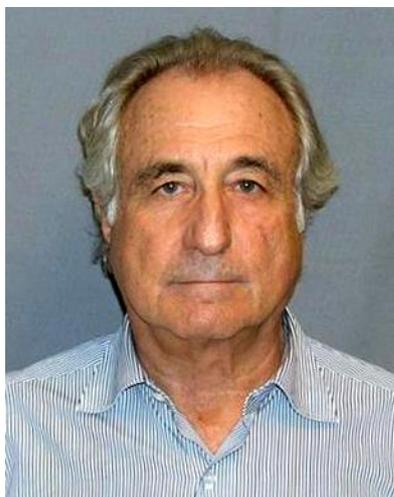
employ the subtle techniques of persuasion all the time, whether it’s done consciously or not and to varying degrees of effectiveness, in all areas of our lives and from a very young age.

In our business dealings, it is crucial to be effective at persuasion, perhaps now more than ever, given the current flat economy. In these uncertain times, fear, greed and resentment are more prevalent.

The landscape has changed and it is now particularly important that we use ‘just’ persuasion as well as ‘just’ measures for appraising a compelling argument. We also need to be very vigilant to those who use ‘unjust’ yet seemingly strong methods of persuasion.

In June we saw the sentencing in the US of Allen Stanford to 110 years in prison for, in the words of the Prosecutors, “one of the most egregious frauds in history”; the defrauding of customers to the tune of \$7bn. Clearly a prodigiously persuasive, as well as an unscrupulous, man.

At least Bernard Madoff pleaded guilty to running a multi-billion dollar Ponzi scheme, confessing to his sons that it was “one big lie”.



Above: Bernie and Al make a good line-up.

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Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



Persuasion - just or unjust ... continued

But he must have been an effective persuader, using his honourable CV to enhance his credibility. Allen Stanford, however, denied any wrongdoing, and told judge David Hittner *"I did not run a Ponzi scheme. I didn't defraud anybody."* Clearly a man in denial!

On this side of the Pond and in a totally different vein, we recently witnessed a master of persuasion, Sir Martin Sorrell, fail in his attempt to win over shareholders at WPP's annual meeting in Dublin. A 60% majority of those shareholders voted against his claim to deserve a 60% pay rise for last year (a remuneration package that would have totalled £6.8m).

Whilst there may be a difference of opinion as to whether Sir Martin deserved such an increase in remuneration, I doubt whether many of us would disagree with the very substantial prison sentence awarded to Allen Stanford given his flagrant abuse of other people's money.

At GPB we teach both the science and art of persuasion, using Aristotle's three appeals (not musketeers!): Logos, Pathos and Ethos, alongside the latest tools of 20th and 21st Century academics such as Petty & Caccioppo, for example their 'Two Routes to Persuasion' (described therein as the Central and Peripheral routes).

These are powerful tools that can be used to sway audiences, customers and clients. We coach our clients using these tools, and like to think they will be employed justly.

The primary objective is to create and deliver the most well-balanced, powerfully persuasive arguments that win over your audiences fairly.

So how do we gauge whether persuasion is 'just' or 'unjust'? How do we make sure we neither use unjust means, as persuader or dissuader, nor become the victims of this deceit and duplicity? The initial answer is, for us as audiences or receivers of these acts, to pay attention and independently verify the information put forward. If you can't do so, then it's time to be sceptical.

However charming, attractive, articulate and engaging the persuader appears, and

however compelling their argument, you need to look and listen for all the signs of incongruence.

Do the facial expressions match the words coming out of their mouth?

Does something not feel quite right? They may have remarkable credentials, their facts and figures may look impressive and their delivery may be slick. But....

We all need to carry out our own thorough 'due diligence'. As many found out the hard way, being a non-Executive Chairman



Frederick placed the ring before Anne

of NASDAQ does not exempt anyone from being a crook!

As to our fictional couple's fate, I shall leave the last word to Captain Wentworth, and his second marriage proposal:

"You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope. Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone for ever. I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own, than when you almost broke it eight years and a half ago. . . . I have loved none but you. Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant."

The spoken full stop



So much of the time good presentations can be spoilt by the way they are delivered, and in particular by the way in which a phrase, key or otherwise, is finished. It's a feature of delivery that is not beyond our control but within our grasp. Here are some ideas to help you get this part right. To learn how to stop. Properly.

Most presenters when speaking have a clear idea of how to start a point or theme, but become a bit more 'crumbly' as they reach the end of it.

The head pitches down, the voice may rise in pitch on the last syllable, which signals uncertainty, disfluent ums and ands fill the air as the person then struggles to keep the show on the road.

Final pause with eye contact

As presenters get to the end of an idea they should engage the audience with their eyes and a period of silence in the final pause. But at that precise moment they are often more fixated on the next idea and so look away, typically at their screen or down at their notes or script.

Using your hands can really help overcome this problem. If you gesture with your hand or hands to emphasise the last few words of a key phrase, then your head and eyes will tend to follow the line of the hands out to your audience rather than down. So have a go at synchronising what you say with your hand gestures.

Try this: make an emphatic statement reinforced by hand gestures but at the end of the phrase drop your head whilst keeping your hands outstretched. It doesn't feel natural! It's like shaking hands with a friend but not looking at them, instead either looking down, away or at their feet.

Advice: practise making key statements with outstretched hand gestures and so train your brain to engage the audience with your eyes and hands.

Imagine you have caught a fish and wanted to tell the audience its size. You might end with "...it was THIS big".

Now have a look at these two pictures above right. Which do you think would be the best way to say it!



"The fish really was THIS big"

The Third Pause

Here's another skills area to develop, the "third pause".

Those who know us will be aware that there are two main sorts of pause that we recommend you deploy whilst at the same time eyeballing the audience.

The first pause is at the beginning of an idea, and allows you time to consider what you are going to say. The second and final pause is as described above; it's at the end of an idea to engage the audience and drive home that point.

But there is a third type of pause, between the other two. It's really an anticipation or dramatic pause.

Here, you're developing an idea but before you reach the end, you deliberately pause and hold a dramatic silence.



Alastair Grant

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



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The spoken full stop ...continued

The audience becomes curious and starts to speculate on what you might say next. Comedians are adept at this. A common place to do it is before the last key word of an idea.

For example, near the beginning of her speech on 16th June at the Nobel Awards in Oslo, Aung San Suu Kyi recounted being asked by her 8 year old son why she might one day be invited on BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs, replied "*perhaps because I'd have won the Nobel prize...for literature*".

The dots represent a dramatic pause for effect, which in this case is anticipation, misdirection and thus humour.



Aung San Suu Kyi speaking in Oslo

Falling intonation

Many times I hear the dreaded rise in pitch at the end of a phrase. This usually means the speaker is not sure they are at the end of their idea or they are already distracted by what the next idea might be. Or it's a bad habit they are not aware of.

A phrase like *we have got to get this right* if delivered with a rising note will sound unsure. The pitch should deepen at the end of such phrases, not rise.

A good way to practice this effect is to use prosody. The first time I heard this word I had no idea what it meant. Simply put, you replace all the syllables with sounds such as 'de' or 'la'. So, "*We have got to get this right*" becomes *de de de de de de de^{dee}* and not *de de de de de de^{dee}?*

Kill the ramblers

If presenters are unsure where they are in their content, they often try to buy time for

themselves by using filler words such as '*and*' or noises like '*umm*' and '*err*'. A few of these are perhaps inevitable but too many (research says over 6 per minute) and they start to make you sound unsure.

Again as you get the end of an ideal spot - indeed anywhere really - you can try to remove these disfluent sounds from your repertoire. We have a wonderful technique for this called 'Just a Minute' named in honour of the radio programme of the same name, about which we have written in previous Journals.

Avoid English Fade

English fade is a phenomenon known widely among phonetics professionals as an affliction that many in the UK have. It is the tendency to reduce our volume as we get towards the end of a point.

It is rare in some languages and unknown in others, due to the structure of sentences. German for example often has the verb at the end, so is a vital component of the phrase, so is spoken clearly.

But here in the UK, the British (it's not fair to say it's only the English) fade out, the volume drops and we hardly hear the word or words at the end.

The solution to this is in part the taking of a proper breath in the right way - using the diaphragm, in part it is learning to use shorter phrases so that we don't run out of air, and in part avoiding the conjoiners (e.g. *and*, *so*, *but*) that cause people to continue to speak when they should have stopped and paused.

In summary:

- Use your hands to assist in engaging the audience
- Employ the anticipation pause before the final key word
- Make your voice drop in pitch but not volume
- Kill those ramblers
- Avoid English Fade.

Now go and try some of this out!

Advice *squeezed*
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How to avoid the modern meeting curse



Tim Farish writes his first article for us since transitioning from Director to becoming an Associate, based in Oslo with the firm he co-founded there, Quickminds. Here he writes about a dilemma we all face....the meeting!



Tim Farish

We've all been in meetings where there appears to be little structure or, at best, the structure is secreted in the heads of the participants. This is particularly true for internal meetings but can also apply to external ones.

A lot of meetings really fall under the title: "So that the MD can feel more comfortable and in control or, so we can all bitch and moan about clients", yet are labelled as something like 'product development news and progress update Q3'.

Whilst having meetings is a necessary and valuable part of our business lives – there are typically too many and their purpose is, at best, questionable much of the time.

The danger is that if attendees feel the purpose is not properly communicated or respected, they conclude that personal agendas are at play and they go through the motions, and resentment builds.

Too many meetings are automatically scheduled and don't have a clear purpose. This then allows things to meander, often unnecessarily and is very frustrating for all concerned.

While most people realise that the need to be in control, or bitch and moan, is a very important one - especially for bosses – this needs to be tightly controlled.

Considering that a significant part of our working week is spent in meetings, and (according to 3M's research) we spend an average of 1-1.5 days a week in meetings, this very conscious strategy is warranted from most organisations if they are to avoid wasting large amounts of such vital resources.



The Fed meetings take some planning!

Action point: Have a clear 'purpose' on the pre-meeting communication. It helps to think of the outcome you want to create. For example, 'To develop a better CSR offering' is better than 'CSR ideas'.

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



This article has tips for running better meetings and maintaining commitment whilst still getting things done.

Tip no. 1: Ask 'why are we having this meeting?' Or if you prefer, 'what's the purpose of this meeting?'

This is obvious in a lot of cases (safety briefings, strategy progress reports) but may only be generally defined and not specific. It is also unclear in many situations, or just not communicated to every attendee. A lot of the purpose of meetings is held in the heads of the organisers or most senior person in the room. If they are too vague or overly concerned with detail then the reason for attending may feel like a mystery to most participants.

Tip no. 2: Have some time in the agenda for flexibility. For most meetings, agendas are important and a critical ingredient for a functioning and healthy outcome.

The problem comes when an agenda item warrants deeper exploration at the time and it is 'parked' for another time – when it would have been better to have dealt with it there and then.

Of course it is a judgement call, but this often happens when there is no clear purpose. There will always be agenda items that warrant more time than is planned, while conversely there will be items which are quicker than planned.

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How to avoid the modern meeting curse...continued

Our Services

Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd (GPB) 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, then provide content, 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. In support of this we selectively pursue new ideas and approaches, continually hone our advice and create tools such as Prospect Relationship Management (PRM), Just a Minute, the Fire Bell Test and the Information Iceberg.

Action point: Cut the number of items on the agenda by 20% to build in flexibility.

Tip no. 3: **Be explicit about expectations and outcomes from the meeting.** There are many different types of meetings and some do not need structured outcomes, for example client relationship meetings. But most meetings are improved when expectations are made explicit.

Action point: Be clear at the start of the meeting what the desired outputs are, and at the end write minutes with specific actions points by specific people with set and agreed deadlines.

Tip no. 4: **Learn to finish on time.** This is really important for engagement in any future meetings.

If you are known as someone who always over-runs, people will start switching off and future attendance participation will inevitably drop.

By committing to finish on time you send out a strong message that you respect other people's time as well as someone who knows how long 'things' take.

If your meetings regularly run over time, it is probably a sign that you are trying to do too much and have unrealistic expectations. Once again, having a clear purpose will help you deal with this.

Action point: Have a timing plan for each agenda item and then add 5 minutes. If you finish early, people will appreciate it.

Tip no.5: **Regularly check in with the 'quietest voice in the room'.** People respond differently in meetings when there is a group dynamic and there is a tendency for the loudest, most extravert characters to dominate air-time and agendas.

This is natural but needs to be kept in check. Just because someone is quiet does not mean they have nothing to add - so

bring them in. Use the phrase 'silence is agreement' with humour and as needed to get the quiet to speak up for themselves. By doing this more regularly you begin to deal with the issue of 'airtime battles' which occur when individuals feel that there will not be enough time to deal with issues, or that they will not be heard.

Action point: Ask for input at least 2-3 times during a meeting, and state that 'silence is agreement', to try to get them to speak up.

Tip no. 6: **Have a meeting-free week or month.** This might seem crazy but just think about it. Once you have proved that the business world does not collapse if meetings don't happen for a period then you are likely to find that only the most important issues i.e. those that require a meeting will be scheduled.

This will lead to a reduction in the quantity of meetings and therefore an increase in productivity.

Action point: Identify blocks of time in the diary and colour-code them as 'meeting free zones'. You can always schedule meetings around this block but treat it like a holiday from meetings.

This is not high powered alchemy, it's a skill and a good habit to get into. It's also a good a set of tips as any for fighting the 'witches' curse' of the modern meeting.



www.understandingrelationships.com



Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd
7 John Street, London WC1N 2ES
Tel: +44(0)20 7831 1000
Website: www.gpb.eu
Email: journal@gpb.eu