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*Happy Christmas, Hogmanay and  
New Year from everyone at  
Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd*



Johnny Pawlik

## Make marketing much more meaningful in 2021

There will be social media winners and losers. It's important to know which is which so you back the winners

For the past five years, my end of November is usually marked by boarding an A380 to Japan with a short stint in Dubai to spend time with friends and colleagues in Tokyo. In a pre-covid year this article could have been along more normal lines of industry tool analysis, more general forecasting and where to Winter with a touch of where to purchase unique perfect gifts within the sprawling neon mega-metropolis that is Tokyo.



*Pinterest demonstrates consistent gradual growth year on year.  
Image source: Mantra Media (2020)*

One of the joys in such a flight is the airtime, allowing me uninterrupted contemplation of our communication plans for the next year and to focus on the key messaging necessary to open doors in new markets. One of the biggest challenges many businesses face is knowing where to invest and push their relevant campaigns, usually linked to both seasonality and major cultural happenings, including significant days and events.

Breaking barriers across borders can be a challenge for even the most erudite of international relations communications consultants. What you need is an understanding of what's happening on the ground and where emerging opportunities are with the technologies and platforms available.

So, here are a few things to consider while planning your communications strategy for 2021:

**Pinterest** - The platform now has 335 million monthly active users and surpassed \$1bn in revenue last year. Unlike the other platforms that have seen fast rises and subsequent falls in users, Pinterest demonstrates consistent gradual growth year on year. New markets where growth is beginning to accelerate are in the UK, Germany, France, and Italy. Unlike TikTok and Instagram, Pinterest is yet to really expand in the East Asian markets. However, over the last year it has outpaced Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook in monthly active user growth.

**In this edition:**  
*Make Marketing in 2021 Meaningful*  
By Guest author Johnny Pawlik

Johnny highlights the importance of marketing, giving tips on how to do so more meaningfully.

**Pitch Up for Christmas**  
By Ewan Pearson

Ewan talks about the importance of having good pitch modulation.

**Through the Perilous Fight?**

By Desmond Harney

Des explores the impact President Donald Trump has had on Communication.

**In Praise of...**

By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Lynda adopts an ancient rhetoric format and creates a speech in praise of the mince pie.

**Tunnelling out of Europe**  
By Ewan Pearson

Ewan shares his latest thoughts on the UK-EU Trade deal, which is nearing the end game.



# Make marketing much more meaningful in 2021 (Cont.)

**Google** - There are around 5.6 billion searches conducted on Google every day! This equates to around 2 trillion searches every year, met with a huge amount of content, with around a billion blogs.

When you use the search term - "*what is digital marketing*", there are only 11,300 global searches a month but an enormous 665,000 pieces of content. One way to cut through the noise is to use AdWords. The language we use and how we position the answers to search queries is everything. A theme across campaigns that currently garner the greatest Click-Through Rates (CTRs) is when marketers choose to change their strategy from *product solutions* to *education*. This is all about giving value as an AdWords strategy, to encourage brand awareness and positive sentiment. This creates more value for customers whilst there's a greater possibility that when the customer comes to purchase, you'll be their preferred product solution.

**WhatsApp** - Facebook bought this SMS platform for \$19bn in 2014. It is now the world's fastest-growing communication app. Over half a billion people around the world are now regular, active users. There are more than 700 million photos and 100 million videos sent every single day. It currently has more users than Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest combined. It also has a 98% AOR (avg. open rate, i.e. how many recipients open messages) vs. typically 15-25%. This makes WhatsApp the most engaged marketing channel on the planet. WhatsApp currently gets 40% more positive responses than text message marketing and phone calls. It has the fastest buying consumer demographics too, with 71% of users aged 18 to 44. One brand that has exploited WhatsApp's effectiveness is Colgate. They invited people to send selfies of their smile via WhatsApp, to a number displayed on the toothpaste pack. The buy-in was a chance to be styled by a celebrity stylist.

**Influencers** - Organic reach (the number of people who see your content without

you paying for distribution) on all platforms is starting to nosedive due to excessive noise, and some gaming of the platforms' algorithms either by financial or strategic means. We've also noticed that influencer marketing budgets are now decreasing massively across all sectors and that the reach of influencers is decreasing too, thus the cost to hire an influencer is at an all-time low. Good riddance? From us, the answer is a definite yes! We saw the hype for what it was some time ago.

**Twitch** - For all you gamers, you'll be very acquainted with Twitch. For those that aren't, it's a mixture of YouTube Live and Facebook, owned by Amazon. It's designed specifically for gamers to stream and share their adventures.

People streaming can receive direct payments from their followers and viewers while they stream. It's now estimated it will grow its regular viewership by 14% to 37.5 million this year and hit 47 million viewers by 2023. Its current growth is the strongest among live streaming platforms although it appears that competitors such as Google's YouTube Gaming, Microsoft's Mixer and Facebook Gaming will be investing massively to compete. Marketers can participate with direct sponsorships of streamers or by buying ad space. About 80% of Twitch's audience is male, and 55% are 18 to 34. Media buying within the platform is on the rise and brands such as the NFL have signed further contracts with Twitch to reach its audience.

To improve your brand awareness, tighten up those client acquisition funnels and have a more cogent approach to your marketing, consider carefully where the market opportunities lie. For 2021 it's obvious that there are some great opportunities on the platforms I've mentioned, and with a cogent strategic approach, you'll be able to reap the rewards of your efforts.

Enjoy the festive season!

Our guest author, Johnny Pawlik, is CEO at Mantra Media. (See [mantrahq.com](http://mantrahq.com)).

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# Pitch up for Christmas

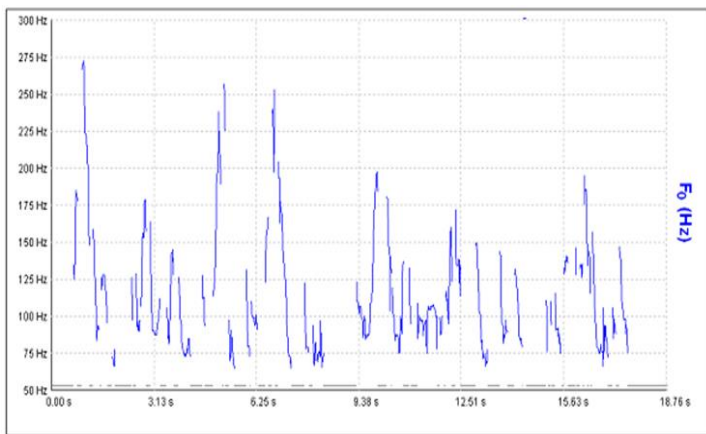


Ewan Pearson

Modulation is probably more important than moderation, but both can be hard to sustain.

**N**ow that those of you who can have pitched up at home, I thought to cheer you all up I'd write more light-heartedly about the most common limitation that we have found when scientifically analysing clients' voices, which is *Pitch Modulation*. This parameter covers how far you go up or down in pitch (*extent*) multiplied by the number of changes/second (*rate*) in pitch height. It can also be called pitch pattern, melody or harmony. Pitch Modulation and Disfluency are the top two limitations, and there are plenty of people out there with both, but as we've covered Disfluency lots in other articles, I'll just cover Pitch Modulation here.

Here is an example of good Pitch Modulation (and good Pitch Range): I think you all know when you hear a



Source: GPB. This is Stephen Fry speaking the first sentence of the first Harry Potter book, filling the range with many changes.

nicely modulated voice versus a not-so-nice flat one. We've conducted experiments on exactly that theme, and the results consistently show that listeners prefer a good dose of modulation, preferably on toast. Or at least that's how it looks from all the Zoom and Teams calls we've been doing with people munching away at home.

Why is a good amount of modulation important? Because if used well it

communicates a bunch of positive attributes such as engagement, pleasantness, enthusiasm, and emphasis. In turn these contribute to persuasiveness, which seems to be the pot of gold for our clients. Thus we have been kept busy working on improving modulation for many years. There is no sign that our attempt to 'boil the ocean' of flat-pitched voices has had an overall effect yet, although it's hard to tell with all this global warming going around.

There are many reasons for flat voices. Genetics contributes little as we have found that almost everyone *can* move their pitch well under testing, showing that there is unfulfilled potential if only we could learn what to do.

Instead the main reasons for flat voices seem to be the voices of those around us as we acquire and develop our own voices. Children start to mimic their parents from a very early age, and indeed this is how they first learn the language/s and accents we all speak with. Then there are broader family and friend surroundings. At school then at university (if fortunate enough to have attended both) the voice develops further, influenced during these most formative years by our peers and teachers.

Then as we get older, it's our cultural social surroundings, our work colleagues, and throughout all of this we'll pick up habits from the voices of those we look up to the most. The media (traditional, and now also social) also have a big part to play.

I now tend not to ask 'where are you from?', and instead ask "where is your voice from?". That more profound question leads to a much more interesting conversation!

**Modulation used well, communicates a bunch of positive attributes**

**Advice squeezed straight from the experts**





# Pitch Up for Christmas (Cont.)

This all leads to the rather obvious question of how can 'someone like me' improve their pitch modulation?

Well, as you're all hopefully away for a bit of a break, here are a few things you could try in the privacy of your own home, to the dismay of the friends or family you manage to assemble over the coming weeks. I'd suggest you all have a go, to share out the embarrassment equitably.



Image: [alivenetwork.com](http://alivenetwork.com) (2020)

## First, The Sentence Game:

Write or type out a sentence of say 12-20 words covering an important topic that you feel strongly about. Then underline the two most important words using this guidance: (a) the words must not be adjacent, or the last word, (b) it's usually better if you underline a simple adjective rather than a noun or verb, but if polysyllabic, select one syllable to make the change on, and (c) don't show the others what you underlined. Now ask the audience to close their eyes. You then read out your sentence to them, using only pitch rises (not volume changes) to signal the two words you underlined. They have to work out which two words you underlined. If it's not clear, try again but with bigger pitch changes, but still trying to keep the voice sounding normal to a listener even if it sounds weird to you.

## Second, hum/speech pairings:

You can take 2-4 words from the sentence above, or use something else. Say these words first by humming them (mouth closed) whilst listening to the pitch pattern (ups and downs), then immediately repeat that pattern but this time with your mouth open using the actual words. The pitch pattern of the

words should match the pattern of the humming. Ask someone to give you feedback on how well you're doing.

**Third, Solfege scales.** These are really singing warm-up exercises, but they're very helpful in strengthening the muscles in your vocal chords that are required to move up and down in pitch height under control. What you do is sing an octave or more from bottom to top, and/or top to bottom. You use the following words on each subsequent note: *Do, Re, Mi, Far, So, La, Te, Do*, repeating the set as needed when you go beyond an octave.

You can develop this exercise by singing louder and/or slower, up and down. Try for the full scope of 2 octaves (male) and 3 octaves (female). There are loads of sound file samples on the internet of people singing these scales.

**Fourth, exaggerate.** This is both a practical and psychological exercise. Take a normal sentence and say it out loud. Then repeat but exaggerate by making the 'ups' go up more and 'downs' go down more. Again, ask for feedback. There is a good video of this exercise on our YouTube channel<sup>1</sup>.

I know that carefully selected versions of these exercises have helped our clients a great deal to improve their pitch modulation. Different things work for different people, but once you have found the ones that work for you, with a bit of motivation and possibly some Christmas cheer you can open the New Year with a newer, more modulated and improved voice that is '*you, but on a better day*'.

By Ewan Pearson

1. See: Vocal exercise - *Speaking #5: What's your pitch pattern?* at #9 in the Public Speaking Playlist at GPB's YouTube channel.

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# Through the Perilous Fight?\*



'Five Gold Rings' have ruled President Donald Trump's communication strategy; we should avoid them.

**F**our Christmases ago, the US electorate had just promoted someone who has been variously described as a combative, narcissistic, thin-skinned, self-publicist 'reality' TV host, to be Leader of the Free World. He wasn't from your regular Presidential mould. Some contacts of mine have since described Trump as "*an excellent Communicator*".

Well, we typically gauge the effectiveness of someone's communication by how much it persuades others. Trump's continuing primary domestic target audience has remained his electoral support base. That's arguably a deliberately divisive strategy. Perhaps it has worked for him, in some ways. But, in terms of persuading non-supporters, Trump has barely moved the needle in four years; he hasn't really tried to.

When challenged, claims of his "excellence" typically contract to "*He communicates a lot. Through Twitter. It's clever!*" I can't refute the quantity claims. I'll even supply some helpful metrics, but clever?

How might Donald Trump's combative communication strategy (his Perilous Fight) influence ours? As it's Christmas, we'll call it his "**Five Gold Rings**".

**1) President of Twitter:** I average 3.4 tweets per month, how about you? Trump has managed a whopping 420 tweets per month over his Twitter lifetime. That's around 14 tweets/day (or 122x my puny rate). And I'd hazard Trump's output has been even higher over the last four years, since choosing Twitter as his principle presidential policy medium. So, by all means, anoint him President of Twitter, King even, if he insists but, as we'll see, not "Excellent

Communicator". He's much more of a showman: *'the charismatic, brilliant master of ceremonies... The ringmaster... a modern P.T. Barnum'*<sup>1</sup>.

**2) 'Fake'** is a term Trump has routinely applied to news which *'he didn't like and didn't fit with his narrative'* and which he countered with his own *'alternative facts'*<sup>2</sup>, aiming to sow doubt about mainstream reporting of his activities. Recently we've had Trump tweeting about "fake" election results. Such tweets now routinely earn an official Twitter accuracy disclaimer, while more mainstream media simply cut him off in midstream, during his more fantastical "stolen election" rhetoric. I've heard a US father reference his para-triathlete son's "*fake pain*"<sup>3</sup>, on hitting "*the wall*", showing how such loaded words can gain insidious and unexpected wider usage: One journalist wrote recently that *'The centrality of language to politics is ancient and recurrent'*<sup>4</sup>.

### 3) **Black and White:**

Nuance is rare in Trump world. You're either Good or (Very) Bad. Either with him (you'd better be!), or against him. Either *Making America Great Again* or part of *The Swamp*. A (BIG) winner or a (sore) loser.

Even celebrated combat veterans are suspect: In 2015, Trump (with no war record of his own) said of Senator John McCain: *"He's not a war hero... I like people who weren't captured."*<sup>5</sup> That definition would be a revelation for many. One US-based foreign observer said of Trump: *"His most deep-rooted fear is the 'Loser' tag"*<sup>6</sup>. That may help explain Trump's desperate denials of electoral defeat. He claimed as late as 5th December that *"We've never lost an election. We're winning this election."*<sup>7</sup>



Desmond Harney



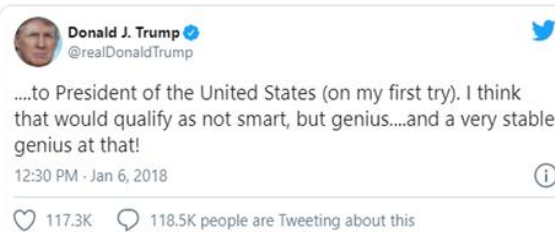
*Making Christmas Great Again?  
Your very own Trump Tree Topper!*<sup>12</sup>

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# Through the Perilous Fight? (Cont.)

4) **Superlatives:** Trump famously tweeted that he was 'a very stable genius' (see image below). In adjacent tweets, however, he used other typically extreme and illuminating vocabulary: 'total hoax', 'Fake News', 'Crooked Clinton', 'VERY successful businessman', and 'top T.V. star'. Trump seems unfamiliar with Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' adage: he "doth protest too much, methinks".<sup>8</sup> Even the provenance of Trump's superlative medical report is questioned: 'astonishingly excellent... the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency'. Ostensibly released by Trump's personal physician, 'could he possibly have had a little help with the drafting?'<sup>1</sup> Trump's fingerprints here (and elsewhere) are revealing. He forgets the Narnia author's advice on exaggeration, offered to an American child: '... you'll have no word left when you want to talk about something really infinite'.<sup>9</sup>



Trump "Epiphany". Source: Trump tweet, 6th Jan '16

5) **Baffling Statements:** Of his first 100 days in office, Trump stated on 28 April 2017: "I thought it would be easier"<sup>10</sup>. Did he really say that out loud? On 25 November 2020, he tweeted it was his 'Great Honor'... to fully pardon convicted felon and perjurer Michael Flynn. In between these eyebrow-raisers, he frequently betrayed a deep ignorance. Two of the many available examples should suffice to illustrate, here:

- A. On a 2018 centenary visit to the WW1 French battle-grounds, Trump asked aides "Who were the good guys in this war?", stating too that he didn't understand why the USA had intervened on the Allied side.<sup>5</sup>
- B. Early in the Covid Crisis, Trump suggested using "tremendous" ultraviolet light and bleach injections as potential virus cures<sup>11</sup>. That's from a 'very stable (medical) genius' who's lost 42 high level members of his team to Covid so far. Laughter and

ridicule rang out around the world, like plangent Christmas bells.

No partridge in a pear tree here, but what can we learn from Trump's Five Gold Rings? Here are a few pointers:

- Social media facilitates quantity (but not always quality) of thinking out loud, so use it wisely/sparingly
- Vocabulary can be infectious; choose it cautiously
- The world is nuanced; black and white doesn't cover all the possibilities
- Too many superlatives spoil the broth
- And finally, if you've nothing sensible to say, maybe consider, even if only sometimes, saying nothing.

These are Trumpian Communication gifts that all seem to just keep on giving!

By Desmond Harney

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- 2) Counsellor to the President, Kellyanne Conway, in a Meet the Press interview, 22 Jan, 2017
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- 12) <https://www.etsy.com/listing/491335673/Trump-tree-topper-make-christmas-great>

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# In Praise of...



Epideictic was an early format taught in ancient rhetorical schools on how to construct certain forms of speeches.

One of the three main categories of rhetorical speech taught in classical Greece and Rome was the *celebratory (epideictic)* or ceremonial speech, i.e. one used to praise or blame something or someone. The other two were *judicial* and *deliberative*, with variations and changes in the names over the years (e.g. forensic, legal, advisory).

With this in mind, and in keeping with the lighthearted tradition of the Christmas SpeakUp! editions, I thought it would be fun to create a speech in praise of Mince Pies, loosely based on this early format taught in ancient rhetorical schools to boys learning how to construct such a speech.

There were countless rules, although once learnt, many accomplished and experienced orators just ignored or bent these rules.

The praise and blame motives explain why you might for example hear elements of the *epideictic* featured in a judicial speech: In 'A New History of Classical Rhetoric', scholar George A. Kennedy writes: "*Quintilian says that Isocrates thought praise and blame were present in every form of oratory*" (two eminent classical rhetoricians).

## In Praise of the Mince Pie

"Mince pies are peculiar to this time of year - and the British Isles. A sweet treat



Co-op (2020)

that can be enjoyed with a cup of tea, or coffee, a mid-morning or mid-afternoon snack, they are a regular feature of any Christmas feast or party. Indeed, their

popularity is such, they even warrant their own **Which?** report!

Some form of mince pie has been around for several centuries, although the modern version of mincemeat, with fresh and dried fruits soaked in alcohol, seasoned with spices and large quantities of sugar, bears little resemblance to the medieval variety.

The earliest version seems to more closely resemble a cow pie eaten by *Desperate Dan*, a character in the comic 'The Dandy'. In size at least.

Size wasn't the only difference. The filling could contain shredded mutton, pork or other meat, seasoned with an array of dried fruits, nuts, spices and honey. The pastry we use in our smaller modern version (sweet short-crust or puff, depending on preference) is also world's apart from the original flour and water combination.

According to English Heritage's web site, the pastry casings of our original mince pies were known as 'coffins'. Rather like the batter around our fish, and the crust of our Cornish pasties, these 'coffins' were there to protect the pie's contents, and were not supposed to be eaten!

One similarity, though, seems to be that they were reserved for special religious festivals, such as Easter and Christmas. English Heritage' states:

*"As the pies were often baked in a rectangular shape, people began to associate them with the manger Jesus had laid in. Soon dough effigies of the baby Jesus were placed on top of the pies to reinforce the religious connection."*

It's unclear exactly when the meat was dropped from the 'mincemeat' recipe, but one of the most famous 19th Century cookbooks, "*Mrs Beeton's Household Management*" featured two recipes: one with meat, and one without. So it could have been soon after that.



Lynda Russell-Whitaker

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# In the praise of... (Cont.)

Just as “*The smell of that buttered toast simply spoke to Toad...*” at the start of Chapter 8 in Kenneth Grahame’s ‘The Wind in the Willows’, so the smell of a warmed mince pie inspires some to serve theirs with cream, ice cream, brandy butter or even custard. To some though, these pies are still an acquired taste. If you don’t have a sweet tooth, or aren’t a pastry fan, it’s a taste you’re unlikely to acquire. Mince pies either leave you cold or you should really eat them daily over the 12 days of Christmas, from 26th December to Epiphany (on 6th January), apparently.

According to The Daily Express online<sup>2</sup>, Her Majesty the Queen enjoys a mince pie or two at Christmas. You can find a



Not even the Queen can resist the charm of a mince pie. Image: (Express, 2020)

link to the Queen’s (alleged) favourite recipe below, provided by HM’s pastry chef. Alternatively, if you’re tempted by a meat version, I can give you a link to English Heritage’s historical version<sup>1</sup>.

According to a survey by Konditor and Cook published this time last year, Brits are set to eat almost 800 million mince pies during this festive period.

So whether you’re a fan of the modern mince pie or not, it’s clear that they are likely to be on our Christmas tables for several more centuries.”

You can check this speech against the structure recommended in the manual **Rhetorica ad Herennium**<sup>3</sup> (published around 85BCE) using *expositio* (the embellishment of an idea) through a series of seven arguments:

- 1) State the subject plainly (*simpliciter*),
- 2) Append a rationale (*ratio*),

- 3) Then (*deinde*) restate the subject a second time (*dupliciter*), with or without rationales (*rationes*),
- 4) Then (*deinde*) bring forward a contrary (*contrarium*),
- 5) Then (*deinde*) an analogy (*simile*),
- 6) An example (*exemplum*), and
- 7) Then (*deinde*) a conclusion (*conclusion*).



The Mirror (2019)

Like recipes for mince pies, the recommended structures for the many types of speech have evolved over the years. It’s remarkable how many of these ‘rules’ are still relevant and apply, so as long as we know when to break or bend them to suit the tastes and values of a modern audience.

By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

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# Tunnelling out of Europe



Negotiations become steeper and faster as they reach their close. The trade deal discussions between the UK and EU have all the traits of a perfectly normal negotiation.

It's a shame to have to write about these very troubled trade deal negotiations in this edition, as traditionally we steer away from the more serious issues in these Christmas Journals. But I feel duty bound to comment, and think we have something to say about this.

I'll start by making it clear that I am pro a trade deal between the EU and UK, as it makes more economic sense than no deal. But this negotiation is not just about 'sense'. Second, I'm writing this as late as possible before publication in the hope that I have the latest changes to hand. But, as there are still two weeks from now to the end of the Transition Period on 31<sup>st</sup> December, there is much that could still, and likely will, change.

A quick review: The UK started this exit on 23rd June 2016 with 52% voting to leave the EU. The UK negotiated unskillfully in the initial period, negotiating then ratifying the Withdrawal Agreement Act on 23rd January 2020; it was unsatisfactory for the UK but good for the EU (in a number of senses). Several extensions before and since then, and we arrive here with two weeks to go having agreed some (97%) of the easiest parts of the deal, and are stuck on the last three most difficult items.



Boris Johnson meets with Ursula von Der Leyen in Brussels for negotiation talks. Image: [www.Bloomberg.com](http://www.Bloomberg.com). Photographer: Andrew Parsons / No 10 Downing Street.

We have often written about how time is not a fixed concept, and the pace of negotiations this month, and then this

past week and even on Saturday 5th December, when Boris met Ursula for dinner and a DMC (Deep, Meaningful Conversation), illustrate that concept. Talks have accelerated due to *time pressure*, itself forced into this negotiation by the creation of a (random) date by which things must get concluded.



In 2007, my GPB co-founder, Alastair Grant, created the idea of three Babushka dolls as a metaphor for the different traits of a good negotiator.

In 2016<sup>2</sup> he added a new fourth and innermost doll, the *Persister*, as he found that one key skill of a negotiator is the ability to keep going for what might be a long time with no loss of energy, as in a marathon.

That persistence dynamic is certainly in play here, with participants and observers certainly being fed up. The Conservative's 2019 slogan in that year's UK General Election, '*Get Brexit Done*'<sup>3</sup> played to the feeling of frustration with the slow progress made.

One key observation about this negotiation is that it's completely standard. Nothing is happening that does not usually happen: disagreements leading to time outs and changes of negotiator, haggling in public, changing terms through concessions (traded and unilateral) using pathos arguments such as being pragmatic and conciliatory, the attempts by both sides to develop *Relative Power* over the other party using tactics and strategies. The final accelerated phase of intense discussions (aka "*The Tunnel*" in EU negotiations) over the three most contentious matters, or what Laura Kuenssberg of the BBC compared to '*the mountain peak, the steps get harder and steeper*



Ewan Pearson

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# Tunnelling out of Europe (Cont.)

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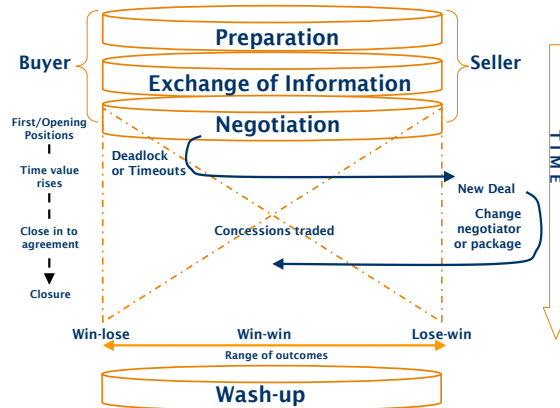
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We also produce scientific voice, visual and content analysis reports, which are unique to GPB. We then provide voice and visual coaching, and content advice.

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:

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- the Information Iceberg,
- Client s' Rights Act,
- Feature, Benefit Impact (FBI),
- Buyers' Criteria Analysis, (BCA), and
- Our Q&A Methodology.

as you're nearly nearly there<sup>4</sup>. These are covered in all our training and in the better books on negotiation skills. Being paid more or being brighter, having more people and time, discussing bigger deals does not change any of that. Here is our summary:



The last three Trade Deal sticking points are on principle, not economics. The key from the UK side is to be treated like an independent state, and not governed or policed by a foreign power. For the EU, the principle at stake is fairness and the avoidance therefore of gaining a competitive advantage, disguised as the metaphor 'a level playing field'. In reality it's *fear* of what the UK might do, i.e. 'cheat' by having more state aid or looser quality controls and grow its economy more quickly. As an aside, the EU also needs to show its members that leavers from its club don't get to flourish, in order to discourage them from leaving. So there's a good mix of posturing for its remaining members to see as well. Yes, it all really boils down to money (here disguised as prosperity, equality and independence).

But things have gotten rather silly when the parties are arguing over conceptual hypotheses that have a low probability of actually occurring. I doubt that the UK is about to end its quality control of drugs, food, and financial services (an ethical point) in order to sell more 'stuff' to

people either in or outside the UK (a logical point). Yet that's what the EU fears – and the UK has shown it cannot be fully trusted on this. The recent spat over the early approval of the Pfizer vaccine for Covid-19 is a very public example of that. The EU reaction was to suggest the UK had taken short cuts, whereas Trump in the USA reacted by ordering a summit<sup>5</sup> to try to speed up approval and minimise the sense that the USA had 'come 2<sup>nd</sup>'.

My second key observation is that we are all starting to panic because completing a trade deal is described as 'success' whilst no deal is described as 'failure'. When working on client negotiations we probably earn most of our fee by reframing such erroneous thoughts, i.e. not always to see walkaway as failure. The idea that '*No deal is better than a Bad Deal*' is really important here, that No Deal is not always worse. If someone offered you the market price for your house, and you just didn't want to sell it, 'no deal' is the successful outcome. There should always be a workable alternative, labelled 'BATNA' (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement) in the traditional training books, but even that has an *implied bias* that doing a deal is better. For the EU and UK this is WTO terms, currently given the label 'Australian deal'.

I hope that the UK and EU agree a deal; just now it seems less likely; the probability has swung wildly in the last few days and even hours. But there are ways to settle how to trade between nations. Clocks will continue to tick on 1<sup>st</sup> January, and with luck, some of us will have an enjoyable Christmas break. I hope that turns out to be the case for all of you. Happy Christmas!

By Ewan Pearson

### References:

1. Speak Up Summer 2016 (31 Aug).
3. Conservative Party manifesto title, 24 Nov 2019.
4. BBC Radio 4 'Today', 7.35am Sat 5th Dec 2020.
5. 'Operation Warp Speed Vaccine Summit' at the White House, on Tuesday 8th Dec 2020.



London Office:  
Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd  
4 Bloomsbury Square  
London, WC1A 2RP  
United Kingdom

Tel: +44(0)20 7831 1000  
Website: [www.gpb.eu](http://www.gpb.eu)  
Email: [journal@gpb.eu](mailto:journal@gpb.eu)