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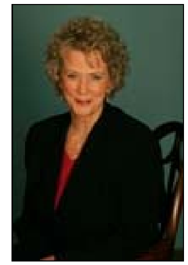
Entrepreneurial Actuaries Section

Vocal Pace and Tone Can Make or Break Your Presentation!

by Paula Lyons



Giving a "wow" presentation is about so much more than doing your research, analyzing your audience and selecting the cool facts, statistics, examples and anecdotes that will be most compelling and interesting. In fact, how you **SAY** all of those things matters just as much, if not more! The way you use the many aspects of your voice often determines how well you capture and hold the audience's attention.

When I cover this topic in coaching, clients often admit they hate the sound of their own voice on their outgoing voice mail message. But probe a little deeper, and most say they have recorded that message over and over until it sounds acceptable at the very least.

I am always fascinated that clients take the time to do *that*, but give little thought to the sound of their voice in meetings or in presentations!

Your voice is part of your personal signature. It is a powerful instrument and speaks volumes about your confidence, conviction and ability to persuade. It is designed to convey not only meaning, but also different levels of interest, enthusiasm and energy.

Still, in her book *Voice Power: Using Your Voice to Captivate, Persuade and Command Attention*, author Renee Grant-Williams explains that most of us "take our voices for granted. This is the voice I was born with, so this is the voice I'm stuck with."

And while it is true that you cannot completely restructure your vocal chords, you absolutely can improve various aspects of your voice! Again, Grant-Williams points out that you are born with a certain kind of hair too. But that doesn't stop you from styling and restyling it so that you look your very best.

You can do the same with your voice.

For example, do you speak too fast? So fast that people have a hard time understanding you? Or do you speak slowly so that the audience sees no

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energy or passion in your delivery? Do you speak without pauses or without variation in your pace? Does your tone suggest appropriate interest, excitement, or concern, or does it simply put people to sleep?

All of these issues can be fixed with the help of electronics and some concentrated practice. Here are some tips we always share with clients:

- Get a tape recorder!
- Use it in the privacy of your own home or office to record your voice in everyday conversations with friends, family or even your end of a business conversation.
- Use it especially to practice and to record your business presentations. (Recorders today are so small that it’s easy to hide them from view.)
- You will then have a baseline understanding of how you sound both in natural conversation and in more formals settings.
- Analyze: What do you like about your voice and your vocal delivery? What don’t you like?
- Experiment! Try different paces and tones while recording. Go beyond what feels comfortable just to hear what it sounds like. You may be surprised to learn that something that felt a bit over the top actually makes you sound more confident or more interesting.
- Don’t forget to experiment with pausing after important thoughts or concepts, or to signal a change of topic or direction. Usually, when you play that back you realize that no pause is ever as long as it felt to you in the moment. This fact is important to recognize because pauses actually help audiences digest what you’ve just said and make you appear comfortable and in command.
- Finally, seek feedback from someone you trust after implementing new vocal techniques.

Soon, you will be well on your way to developing a reputation as one of the better speakers around. Remember, you are as good as you decide to be.

Paula Lyons is an executive coach and senior communications consultant with Bates Communications. A sought-after speaker, writer, coach and media expert, she provides her clients with the advice of a veteran who has experienced both sides of the podium and platform. Her background in television, radio, public speaking and performance helps the executives she coaches develop the skills to deliver powerful messages with an effective communication style. Contact Paula by visiting www.bates-communications.com.

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Entrepreneurial Actuaries Section

Chairperson's Column: An Entrepreneurial Actuary's Web Resource

by Kevin M. Dolsky

The Entrepreneurial Actuaries Section exists to provide education, networking and business resources to our members. We are providing a variety of meeting sessions, webcasts and communications to carry out the education element of our objectives. Additionally we are expanding our vendor "preferral" program. The Section Council is considering additional actions to further the networking and business resources objectives.

The current focus of this consideration is on Web-based resources. The SOA and the Sections are about to start a process to enhance the Web, including Section Web pages. We would like to be able to provide input from you, our members, to this process.

Your Section Council is just starting to brainstorm ideas for enhancements, and we'd like to share our preliminary thoughts with you. There will be a lot of behind the scenes work to ensure these ideas are feasible (some may not be), but we want to strive to make the best tools and resources available to you, the entrepreneurial actuary. We can only do that with your help, so we hope you'll complete the poll included in this newsletter (in the sidebar just to your left), and even better contact a council member to let us know exactly what you think!

Member Bios

The site would provide EAS members the opportunity to post contact information and an abbreviated description of the type of services and/or products the member offers.

Member as Provider of Services

This section would provide an opportunity for EAS members to indicate more detail about the specialty product(s) or areas of service they provide. This may be organized by increasing level of specificity; from practice area to broad categories or functions to specific project area. Someone looking for a particular expertise may be able to sort by these descriptors to find members with particular capabilities. For example, one may indicate the practice area of Health, the category of Medicare Part D and the specific project of Actuarial Attestations for Subsidy Applications. Exactly how such a listing will be organized to be most effective still needs to be defined.

The intent of this listing of services would be to provide an opportunity for

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members to both network and advertise.

Project Posting
The objective here is to provide an opportunity for EAS members and others to post project assistance needs. This can provide the entrepreneurial actuary with additional staffing for large projects or additional expertise for projects of broad scope.

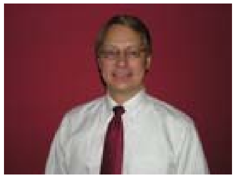
Peer Review Posting
The entrepreneurial actuary may have the need for peer review assistance. We envision a capability for the Web site to have a section on peer review needs. Additionally the section would provide a contact listing for those actuaries that are interested in providing peer review services.

Outside (Non-Member) Posting
Non-EAS members will be able to provide a listing of services they provide that may be of use to entrepreneurial actuaries. These may include such areas and legal, data, human resources, office services, information technology, insurance and other areas.

M & A Activities
Member's interests in buying and selling business opportunities are included here. This may be buying and selling of practices or business segments. Some may be looking to partner or affiliate with similar or complementary practices.

Let the Buyer Beware!
We envision the Web-based resource to be a forum to provide opportunities to bring together providers and users of various services and needs. We do not anticipate any involvement by the Section in the transactions that may occur. Further, the EAS involvement is to facilitate the connections and does not include interaction with the participants. We will function as a clearinghouse and not a referral service. We will not evaluate or endorse participants.

Volunteers Needed!
Please take a moment to respond to the poll question in this newsletter (in the sidebar to the left of this article) so we can gauge your interest in and priorities for this project. If you have and ideas to contribute or interest in participating in the development of the Web-based resource for entrepreneurial actuaries described here, we welcome and would appreciate your contribution. The project is in the definition and formulation stages and could use your input. Please feel free to contact me or other council members directly.



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Entrepreneurial Actuaries Section

Eight Tips to Establish Professional Boundaries

by Maureen C. Costello

Between socializing, dining and traveling with colleagues and clients, being a successful player in the business world requires proper business etiquette both inside and outside of the office. Here are a few tips for establishing professional boundaries in business social situations.

1. Set meetings with clients in public spaces when traveling. Many people in business are strangers to us until we establish a relationship. Trust in this relationship is built by maintaining both your professional behavior and reputation. Set meetings in public locations such as hotel lobbies or airport lounges. This will not only help new clients feel comfortable and at ease, but also ensure that perceptions of the business meeting remain professional.

2. Ask a colleague to join you. Many business events involve alcohol. When someone drinks too much, unprofessional behavior can ensue, from trade secrets being revealed to overly-familiar physical gestures being made. Seeking the support of a colleague cannot only help monitor and curtail such behavior, but can also provide a second perspective when debriefing about the client and key meeting points.

3. Use eye contact and physical distancing. We establish boundaries in many non-verbal ways. To show confidence and sincerity, begin with a firm handshake and steady eye contact. Showing confidence using a firm handshake leaves a clear message that you are about the business at hand. Physical distancing is another way to set boundaries. A typical western business distance is one arm's length around the body. By keeping proper physical boundaries, all parties will feel more at ease.

4. Emphasize formality vs. familiarity. Failing to make the distinctions between being physically comfortable at home and being comfortable in a work environment is another way boundary messages with others get confused. Sitting tall and looking attentive at meetings is key to being perceived as a caring and strong leader. Extremely relaxed lounging type posture at work, physical touch and casual conversational content (including text messaging and e-mails) are all ways in which formality gives way to over familiarity with others. It is very difficult to recover in a relationship once you have become too familiar since that is the pattern that has been established. It's best to maintain a level of formality in all business settings including business social events.

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5. Keep the conversation professional. Conversational content is an area that can create boundary issues for business people. With increased media access and the relaxing of social etiquette, it is easy to overstep boundaries with a client or colleague. What you deem acceptable conversational topics may be different in a business setting than with friends and family. Keep to topics that are an easy link into deeper business conversations, such as weather, sports, cultural events, vacations and local restaurants. Additional safe topics are hobbies and lighter business/industry updates. Avoid talking about sex, money, religion, politics and unsettling news stories.

6. Change the subject. When group conversations do become inappropriate, the best strategy is to ignore the behavior. Simply turn to a person in the opposite direction and ask an open-ended question. If you are with the individual who is speaking inappropriately, ignore the comment and change the subject. Depending on the nature of the comment and your relationship with the person, making an “I” statement may also be effective, for example: “I would appreciate it if you would not talk about _____. It makes me feel uncomfortable.”

7. Dress for business. Fashion vs. professionalism is an on-going discussion in the work press. With four generations making up the workforce, each with different guidelines for what is appropriate, there can be missteps. No matter the generation, being clean and pressed is an expected minimum. Watch as you push the dress code with new fashion trends, for these can tip the scales to inappropriate. Each company has their own code of what is inappropriate. For some it’s messy and dirty clothes; for others, jackets are required. When it comes to maintaining your outer appearance, make professional choices and apply them consistently so as to decrease your risk for boundary issues. Clothes do send messages; make sure your choices signal your intentions for success.

8. Use written communication. Once you put something in writing, it is permanent. Many companies monitor e-mails and instant messaging. Well-crafted and thoughtful responses to clients and colleagues can make a difference in the way you are perceived professionally. Gear your missives to the other person’s communication style. For example, when writing to a colleague who is very conversational, include more detail in the e-mail. When working with a driver type colleague, on the other hand, keep communication direct and to the point.

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How to Get Prospects to Take Action

by David C. Miller

Are you frustrated because your prospects seem slow to take action? Would you like more success in selling your product, service or idea? Then you want to become familiar with these four principles of influence. They're based on human psychology and behavior. Whether you're a business owner, consultant, sales professional or a leader in an organization, to be influential you must become a student about what makes people tick.

Principle #1: A person's primary motivation is, "*What's in it for me?*"
As cynical as this statement sounds, its truth can't be denied. We all view the world from our own self-centered perspective. By self-centered I don't mean selfish in that we put ourselves above others. I mean that we are motivated by what's important to us.

If you've had any training in sales, you've probably heard of this concept —What's In It For Me (WIIFM). As much as you may have heard of it, the idea can't be overemphasized. Most sales professionals and consultants I observe do a less than adequate job focusing their marketing and selling activities this way.

A common mistake professionals make is to focus on telling their prospect what's great about themselves or their organization. They're often ignoring Principle #1. Think of it this way: Your prospect's radio station is tuned to WIIFM. Most consultants broadcast on WWD (What We Do) or WWTYN (What We Think You Need). They're transmitting their message on the wrong frequency!

So when you're writing sales copy, preparing a sales meeting or selling one of your ideas, you want to be ready to answer this critical question. Put yourself in your client's shoes. What's important to them? Why would they care about your proposal? What do they get out of it? How will it benefit them personally?

Principle #2: A person's behavior is based on their need to either *avoid pain* or *gain pleasure*.
This principle explains a core reason why people do or don't do something. People on diets don't succeed, in simple terms, because they're linking more pain to losing weight than not losing weight. A person may complain about his job because he hates his boss. But does he leave his job? No, because the uncertainty he associates with finding another job is more painful than dealing

Visit our Web page for more information, or view past articles at our Resource Center.

And review special offers for our members at our Member Benefits page, from vendors recommended by other EA Section members.

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with his boss.

Prospects take action when the pain of change exceeds the pain of the status quo.

Many professionals don't fully explore the problems (or pain) a prospect has that would cause them to want to buy their product or service. They spend a lot of time conveying the benefits of a solution, but neglect exploring the pain of the status quo. They leave out what could be the greatest aspect of motivation and influence. Remember: **An undisturbed prospect will not buy!**

Principle #3: *Immediate* pain or pleasure is a stronger motivational force than *future* pain or pleasure.
This principle is why so many fail at dieting. The pleasure of having that chocolate cake now often outweighs the consequences that show up on the scale later. Alternatively, the pain of giving up that cake now is a stronger force than the satisfaction of sticking with the diet and dropping unwanted pounds.

The vast majority of smokers stop smoking only after a serious heart attack or cancer diagnosis. Few stop for the promise of better health. Even though the health hazards of smoking are well-documented, the pleasure of smoking that cigarette overrules.

So what does this mean to you? This principle is important because our solutions typically offer future benefits, but may require some immediate pain. Your proposed solution may be very desirable, but the prospect will (unconsciously) weigh it against the immediate pain of paying your fees and the hassle factor of change. Any change will involve pain, because it represents movement from the status quo. It's easier to keep things the way they are, even it they aren't perfect.

To counter act this you need to help the prospect **feel future pain in the present moment**. The human imagination is a powerful thing. When we imagine or dream something vividly, it's hard to distinguish the thought from reality. So as an influencer we need to become skilled at helping people futurepace the status quo. In other words, you need to get them associated with what will happen in the future if they don't buy your product or service.

Principle #4: A person makes buying decisions based on emotion and justifies this decision with logic.
Just think about the last major purchase you made: your home, your car, your plasma TV! Didn't emotion play a large part in your decision to go ahead and make the purchase? This is not to say there weren't plenty of logical reasons why you bought what you did. But I think you'll agree that the more money you lay out for a product or service, the more emotional payback there needs to be.

You may feel this principle doesn't apply to what you're selling. The truth is that it does. Let's say you're selling a computer system to a corporation. What's emotional about that? The buyer will compare your product with your competitors' versions and see which one will do the best job (e.g., fastest performance, most comprehensive reports, most user-friendly, etc.). It seems purely logical, doesn't it?

But wait—think about the buyer—what does he or she want to accomplish? Doesn't the buyer want to appear smart—like he or she made a really great decision for the company? Isn't that an emotional desire? Logic is used to figure out which decision will accomplish this emotional goal! So even if your product or service is heavily technical, don't discount the emotional component.

To be influential, we need to take into account both logic and emotion. Of the two, emotion is a much more powerful motivating force. Unfortunately, too many people ignore the emotional component and focus solely on logic—neglecting what compels people to buy.

Take inventory of how you approach sales and marketing. Are these principles embedded in your process? If not, start building them in and you'll experience faster closes and more of them.

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