



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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[Print-Friendly Article](#)[Search Back Issues](#)

Contents

- ➔ [Your Practice is a Success; Now Sell it Successfully! Part One](#)
- ➔ [Stand Out and Have an Impact on Your Next Conference Call](#)
- ➔ [Actuaries and the Environment in Australia](#)
- ➔ [Why IT ROI Needs to Be Rethought](#)
- ➔ [Current Trends in the Secondary Insurance Market](#)

December EA Section
Webcast:*Starting Your Practice; Ready for Success*

Dec. 9, 12:00 - 1:00 EST

Join this webcast with featured writer David Rintoul for practical guidance in setting up a consulting practice, giving you the legal and business tools to succeed. The session will cover such issues as:

- The form of business entity to use,
- Preparing before you leave your current employer,
- If your non-compete is enforceable,

Stand Out and Have an Impact on Your Next Conference Call

by Paula Lyons

The ability to speak up and make substantive contributions in meetings is a measure of your value to any organization and a great way to boost your career. When you do this well, you increase your visibility and you showcase your knowledge and expertise. What's more, as language expert and author James Humes says: "Every time you speak, you are auditioning for leadership."

Still, speaking up in face-to-face meetings is one thing. But how do you stand out on a conference call? How do you enhance your presence and reputation when no one can see you and when all you have—to sell yourself and your idea—is your choice of words and your voice?

Well, first you have to demonstrate that you understand and regularly practice respectful conference call etiquette. Try these suggestions:

- Show up on time (that means a few minutes early!).
- Be prepared to contribute.
- Take the call in a quiet, distraction-free location; no cell phones.
- Understand how and when to use the mute button, especially if you're taking notes on a keyboard.
- Ask to be recognized and wait to be called on before you speak.
- Always say your name each time you speak.
- Make your contributions concise and clear.
- Listen and pay attention to others' ideas and input.
- Don't interrupt. Ever!
- Wait until others have weighed in before speaking a second time on the same topic.

Beyond these rules of etiquette, however, *how* you speak—the words that you choose and the way you say them—is truly the only way to stand out from others who also follow the rules of etiquette. So consider this:

- Write out what you know you want to say, and then revise your script for power, brevity and clarity. Eliminate all unnecessary words.
- Speak up, speak clearly, and at a pace others can't help but understand. Be especially sensitive if the call is global or includes any participants whose first language is NOT English.
- Remember that your voice is *the whole thing* on a conference call; it's

- Assembling a "virtual firm,"
- Structuring your deal with partners,
- Managing intellectual property,
- Independent contractors vs. employees, and
- Taking a minority interest in a business.

Find more information [here](#) on the SOA Website.

Entrepreneurial Actuaries Section

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your only personal signature. So use all of it! Your voice will help you convey all that you intend: your precise meaning, your level of confidence and your conviction.

- Are you normally soft-spoken? Then raise your volume a notch. Vary your pace and tone so that you'll sound as interested in the subject matter as you actually are.
- I also advise clients of our firm to stand up, if possible, during the call, and maybe even walk around, because this can increase the energy in your voice.

After all these suggestions have been incorporated into your conference call behavior, how can you finally know if your words and your voice are sending all the signals you intend? Here are two final suggestions:

- Tape record your side of the call, then listen and evaluate your persuasiveness, conviction and choice of words.
- Solicit feedback, on both content and style, from trusted friends and advisors also on the call. They'll be more than willing to help.

To succeed in conference calls, keep working on ways to improve how you use your language and your voice. In speaking of any kind, practice makes perfect! Before long, you'll stand out as the "go-to expert" in your area of expertise.



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.

[[return to top](#)]

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Actuaries
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