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Voice Power – Part II

This is the second article of a two-part series on using the power of your voice to convey meaning and emotion to your audience. Along with eye contact, gestures, movement and facial expression, your voice is a key component of non-verbal communications.

Your voice has an incredible range and ability to convey meaning and emotion. Yet most of us use only a small part of that range. Use the following guidelines to unleash the power of your voice so you can deliver your message effectively and connect to the audience:

Use pauses. Pause before an important word, at the end of the sentence or anywhere you'd like a break. The audience has time to absorb the information, you have a chance to breathe and you're less likely to use a pause word such as "um" or "ah."

I remember a cartoon in which a man looked distressed after his dog dragged in the paperboy. The bubble above the man read: "Oh dear, perhaps I should have made myself more clear. I said "Fetch me the paper, boy" (*Rubes*, © Leigh Rubin). See what a difference a comma can make? In writing, you use punctuation to provide meaning; when speaking, you have to use your voice and body language to provide the punctuation that provides meaning: "Bring in the paper [pause] boy."

Use voice inflection. Inflection allows you to emphasize key words and emotions and helps convey your exact meaning to the audience. For example, try speaking the sentence, "I know the answer" with a variety of different meanings just by changing your voice inflection. You could say "*I* know the answer [no one else does]" or "I **know** the answer! [all that studying paid off]" or "I know the answer?" [no, I don't] or "I know the answer... [but what's the question?]" These sentences have vastly different meanings, but the words are the same – only your voice inflection has changed.

Be aware of your voice tone. Does your voice have energy? Do you sound angry, tired, bored? Remember, as with other forms of non-verbal communications, your voice has to match the words that you say. If you say "I'm excited to be here," but your voice conveys boredom, the audience will believe your non-verbals rather than your words.

Your voice has a wide range and the potential to convey meaning and emotion to your audience. Learning to tap into the power of your voice will enable you to become a more powerful communicator.

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