

## Get Confident!

**The message you put across is not only in your words. It is in your expression, your body movements and the tone and emphasis you put on your words.**

## YOUR VOICE

Your voice is probably the most useful tool you have for public speaking and presentations – but it is also easy to forget that you have to think about how you are using your voice to make a good impression.

Here are a few tips to help you to use your voice well:

- If you can get into the habit of talking from the back of your throat, you will find that your voice will be easier to understand and your presentation will carry more. This is a far better way of projecting your voice than shouting or speaking loudly.
- If you want to know how you sound to other people, put your fingers in your ears while you are talking.
- Try to speak more slowly than you normally do, as it helps the audience to follow the presentation. Do not think that you have to speak without any pauses. This will be exhausting for your audience.
- Be proud of whatever accent you may have. Speak the way you normally do, otherwise your presentation will sound very false.
- When you are giving your presentation allow yourself to move your body and arms, as you would if you were speaking normally, you will find that this helps you to put expression in your voice.

## BODY LANGUAGE

We start forming impressions of people we meet from the moment we set eyes on them. A large part of the initial impression you create – some experts estimate as much as 80% - comes from your body language.

Your posture, facial expression, eye contact, and gestures can speak as loud as, or even louder than, the words that you say.

The thing about body language is that we all interpret it all the time – largely on a subconscious level. You will already understand much more about body language than you realise. For this reason, if you try and control your body language too much it can end up looking fake. But there are a few subtle tricks you can employ to make yourself appear more confident than you are actually feeling.

## FACING FACTS



The face is the most expressive part of the body. Yet sometimes its message can be a bit misleading. Someone who is anxious, for example, may adopt a rigid, tense facial expression. It's possible to misinterpret this as sadness, anger or even disapproval. It also means that if you are feeling anxious then your facial expression may lead you to appear aloof, disapproving or disinterested.

#### Using your tools

- **A smile can help you look more approachable – even when you're feeling nervous.**

Making a conscious effort to smile will help you to appear warm, open, friendly and **CONFIDENT** – even if you are feeling on edge.

If smiling feels fake to you, then try to simply relax your facial muscles. Not only will this make you appear more relaxed, it will also make you feel it. It is almost impossible to feel anxious when your muscles are relaxed.

#### **THE EYES HAVE IT**

Our eyes give clues to our emotions. A direct stare implies intensity – but it may be romantic interest, aggression or fear. Making very little eye contact can either convey shyness and submissiveness, or superiority and a lack of interest. The middle ground of a gaze says that you are interested, secure and at ease.

If you keep your eyes averted (as is common if you are nervous) then you will look less like you want to be where you are, and appear less approachable. To fight this, actively force yourself to look up and direct your gaze around you from time to time.

#### Using your tools

- Use your eyes to express interest - in other people or your surroundings.
- Look people in the eye – looking above or below their heads will not do
- Don't look down and avoid eye contact, your audience will not feel involved and quickly lose interest.
- Try to look at everyone and use only a passing gaze. If you look at people for too long they will feel uncomfortable.

#### **GESTURES**

Your hands are so very expressive. Open gestures (moving your hands further apart, or exposing your wrists) tend to make you appear open and honest. And by pointing your finger, or moving your hands closer together, you can draw emphasis on what you are saying.



Used in moderation, hand gestures can make you seem enthusiastic and committed. But you should take care not to over-use them. Making too many hand gestures can make you appear nervous and uncontrolled.

#### Using your tools

- You can use wide hand gestures to imply openness, and small hand gestures to emphasise what you are saying.
- Don't stand in a fixed and rigid position. If you move around a bit your voice will become more animated and so be easier to listen to. However, don't do this too much, as it can be very distracting.
- Don't hunch up your shoulders. This will make you seem unconfident about what you are saying.
- Similarly if you slouch or lean, it will seem as if you just don't care. You need to stand up straight.

