

CENTRAL
SCHOOL
OF SPEECH & DRAMA

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR BUSINESS

THE ROLE OF THE CREATIVE IN THE CORPORATE
Actor Training Techniques for the Business Sector

Founded in 1906, the Central School of Speech & Drama is an internationally renowned Centre for Excellence in Training for Theatre and is a specialist college of the University of London. Central's famous alumni include Riz Ahmed, Nonso Anozie, Gael Garcia Bernal, Judi Dench, Dawn French, Andrew Garfield, Cameron Mackintosh, Graham Norton, Laurence Olivier, Harold Pinter, Vanessa Redgrave, Josette Simon OBE and Deepak Verma. Central offers professional speech and drama training that is innovative, socially responsive and tailored to the needs of diverse client groups.

The School of Professional and Community Development (SPCD), within Central, transfers the skills that Central offers to businesses and the community through working with voluntary and community organisations, the public and private sector. It seeks to provide programmes that enhance personal wellbeing and productivity at work.

This toolkit has been funded through the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) and developed by the Innovation Team within SPCD. HEIF is designed to support and develop a broad range of knowledge transfer activities which result in economic and social benefit to the UK. The funding has enabled us to work with diverse groups, business and community sectors. Over the three year period, training has built on experiential pedagogy, exploring further applications of the use of specialist theatre techniques in business settings. The application of training and its outcomes enabled us to assist businesses to engage more deeply with creative problem solving, presentation and communication skills.



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INTRODUCTION

The toolkit is a dissemination of best practice developed over the three year project to assist those who are seeking employment, in employment and developing career opportunities. It has been developed through pedagogical exploration and client feedback. The work is designed to meet the needs of the current employment market. As numbers of unemployed rise in the UK, individuals require a competitive edge and having life skills are essential - these are the skills that schools and businesses generally do not provide. However every sector benefits from an individual who is not afraid to put themselves forward, think on their feet and have confidence in selling themselves and their skills.

The toolkit is ideal for anyone at any stage in their career. All activities, tools and exercises have been developed to work within your daily routine or can be tailored for specific business training needs. It is written simplistically, articulating methods which are fast and effective, resulting in a direct, positive impact in the workplace. The metaphor of the car, *Your Vehicle to Success*, has been used throughout the toolkit as a tangible example to develop awareness and understanding of the body and voice for effective communication.

APPROACHES TO BUSINESS TRAINING

Actor training methodologies are used in business settings to develop innovative approaches to voice, communication, creative problem solving, conflict resolution, presentation, customer service and networking skills. This section highlights four key applications: Role Play, Forum Theatre, Storytelling and Wing Chun.

Role Play

Role play involves taking on an imagined disposition and putting oneself in an imagined situation. It is a drama technique that can be used to explore potentially difficult circumstances through improvised or scripted scenarios with audience interaction. This is a very effective technique if issues occurring within the company cannot be addressed personally. By using role play we can consider behaviours, beliefs and interactions that may otherwise be too personal to discuss. This ensures that staff motivation, relationships and business ethos is maintained and confrontation can be avoided.

In a training context, the true to life scenarios that have been created include interview situations, customer service skills, embedding company beliefs and core values as well as pitching business ideas and concepts. Participants have the opportunity to analyse the use of body language and verbal language as a key tool in presenting positive results in potentially difficult situations. Role play also offers participants the opportunity to put techniques learnt during training into practice.

Role play can be used to:

- > Communicate messages effectively.
- > Develop emotional intelligence and empathy.
- > Develop negotiation, persuasion and listening techniques.
- > Learn how to deal with aggression and remain calm in a stressful situation.
- > Use effective language and body language.

Business Professional:

Combination of role play and theory helped make it real and easy to apply to the work situation.

– *North Mersey Talent Programme participant*

Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre was created by the innovative and influential practitioner Augusto Boal as part of what he termed 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. As a method of training, it allows participants to watch issue-based scenes, in which a central character (protagonist) encounters an oppression or obstacle. In a training context, this obstacle tends to be a shared problem amongst the group such as cross-cultural communication challenges or client centred difficulties. The short play is re-run and the 'spect-actors' (active audience members) can stop the scene at any time and coach the characters shown in the scenes to 'better outcomes'. They can also take the place of the protagonist and try out their ideas/solutions. The other characters (actors) react accordingly.

Additionally, a facilitator acts as a go-between, feeding suggestions to the actors and managing input from the audience. The event becomes a forum in which ideas and experiences are tested and shared. Delegates are engaged with and entertained by a play written especially for them as well as learn techniques in a safe and supportive environment.

Forum Theatre can be used to:

- > Improve communication between colleagues.
- > Empower participants as their suggestions help turn faltering relationships into productive ones – problems become solutions.
- > Develop an innovative, provocative and interactive style of training.
- > Create a forum for participants to voice their work-base concerns.

Business Professional:

The 'real life situations' from everyday life meant we were able to air our views around managers and learn how to defuse a situation when getting out of control.

– *London Central and London General Bus participant*

Storytelling

How many times have you been fascinated by a good story? How many times have you ever stayed up reading a novel that you 'couldn't' put down? Or been spurred on by the story of someone else's success or maybe changed your opinion after reading an informative article? Stories can have great impact on the way that we act, think and feel. Storytelling is one of the oldest art forms and its importance in the workplace is becoming increasingly apparent.

Early forms of storytelling were believed to be primarily oral - relying on gestures and expressions. Traditionally, these oral stories were committed to memory and then passed from generation to generation often used to inspire and motivate. Stories demonstrate culture, custom and beliefs inherited through ancestors over generations. Stories unite and rouse communities, dispel apathy and can promote change – skills which are essential for business. Many great leaders and CEOs are influential because they understand the power and art of storytelling.

In a training context, participants can explore and embed the story of their organisation. This is a very effective technique to motivate staff thus having great impact within the workplace; the right story can motivate a team into action, persuade others to change their opinions or to encourage team members to think outside the box.

Storytelling can be used to:

- > Explore emotion and personalisation when discussing business.
- > Give an opportunity to practice the use of voice and body language.
- > Explore the 'story' of your company with clarity and meaning.
- > Develop motivation, team morale and shared experience.

Business Professional:
I believe the storytelling performances unleashed each of our unique values, passions, strengths and curiosity.
– Public sector organisation participant

Wing Chun

Within actor training great emphasis is placed on movement; the use of gesture in characterisation as well as finding strength, stability and flexibility to adapt to the demands of any performance. Wing Chun is a training tool in which practitioners can explore specific movement to develop core strength and performance expertise. Using martial arts philosophy in business has a variety of very similar beneficial qualities. It develops your mental stability and spirituality, therefore ensuring a calm state of mind where you are grounded and ready to react to an attack or counter attack. The concept of Wing Chun is to prepare for the unexpected yet keeping your mind, body and breath in line and centred. It is to allow oneself to control emotions through discipline. Through this process it develops your character and knowledge of one self; a practitioner's sense opens up and awareness of space and surroundings heighten.

In a training context, participants are encouraged to discover a physical, metaphorical approach to business philosophy. Individuals are able to explore counter attacking, defending, control, redirection, using efficient power and core strength. It allows an individual to approach business through a different medium.

Martial arts can be used to:

- > Develop skills in approach, reaction and negotiation for any business context.
- > Create a platform for confidence building and team work.
- > Develop trust and focus within a company.
- > Find a sense of self in space and time, exploring status and character interaction.
- > Explore the entire mind and body to open all the senses with a natural state of awareness.
- > Build character, confidence and self discipline.

Business Professional:
The Wing Chun showed that by working with colleagues outside our normal spheres of work we can work together towards a common goal.
– Public sector organisation participant



SECTION ONE

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?
YOUR VEHICLE TO SUCCESS

**Jason:**

It is not *what* you say it's *how* you say it.

**Emily:**

Communication is also about being reciprocal, being a good listener as well as engaging in your own thoughts and spoken word.

**Amanda:**

Words only have an impact of 7%, the voice and the way it is used has an impact of 38%, and the visual, how a person presents themselves, 55%.

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is imperative in any social or professional situation. Your body and voice expose your emotions and opinions to the world. Poor communication skills can prevent success, create misleading outcomes and incorrect assumptions. By using effective communications skills, you can make a positive impact and get your needs met.

Freeing the body and voice from habit gives you flexibility: flexibility for space, circumstance and audience. Through practice and experience you can communicate with clarity, conviction and emotion to inspire, sell and gain results.

Fundamentally, building awareness of what you do and how you use your body and voice is key to driving *Your Vehicle to Success*. Awareness is the starting point for self discovery, learning and personal development. Often what you think you are expressing may be interpreted very differently by your audience. In any context or situation, you must be able to translate all communication signals directly and connect with what you are saying on an intellectual as well as emotional level.

Flexible communication skills are essential for success in the workplace and can assist with every aspect of business; creating confidence in interview, bringing your presentation to life, developing new and existing relationships, managing staff, staying calm in stressful situations and combating nerves.

Remember, often people buy people and not product or business. Therefore in order to maximise impact and get the best results, you need to have the right communication tools.

YOUR VEHICLE TO SUCCESS

There are four factors to successful communication:

- > **Free Body – Engine**
- > **Free Breath – Fuel**
- > **Free Resonance – Quality of Performance**
- > **Free Articulation – Specificity of Performance**

FREE BODY – ENGINE

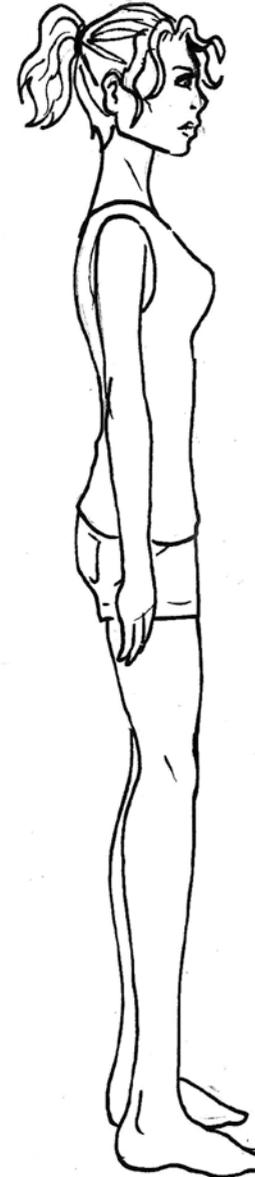
Working with good posture and released muscles are the fundamental tools for effective communication. In an interview, presentation, meeting or networking situation, if you can stand or sit with effective posture (alignment), the muscularity of the body will be used in its most optimum way. The better the posture, the better the quality of the sound because the body can breathe easily. Your body can then be used to its full potential.

We are born with good posture. However, over our lives we develop new, obstructive muscular behaviours which change the way we use our bodies. Using a computer, wearing high heels, carrying heavy bags or playing sport all have an influence on how muscles are used and how we carry our bodies. Freeing the body through release exercises and finding optimal alignment can allow our bodies to return to our infantile state by balancing and readdressing unnecessary tension.

Effective alignment when standing

**Jason:**

Feet hip width apart, knees soft, a long spine, length in back of the neck, shoulders released. Think long and wide all over the body. Do not over open the chest, allow the back to also feel open.

**Business Professional:**

These techniques have shown how alignment brings a more assured stature that easily translates into a confident presentation.

– King's College London participant

Effective alignment when sitting**Emily:**

Think about your feet sinking into the floor. Allow the buttocks to sink into the chair as the spine lengthens towards the ceiling.

**Business Professional:**

A real gem of a workshop. Made me think about bad habits I've picked up after sitting hunched over my desk all day.

– Centa participant

Effective alignment when lying**Amanda:**

Think about your feet sinking into the floor, knees moving towards the ceiling. Allow the buttocks to sink into the ground, the spine to feel long and the back of the skull to release into the floor.

Business Professional:

Working on alignment has really helped my breathing. I feel much more relaxed and energised.

– Participant from public sector organisation.

Business Professional:

I thought the breathing techniques were useful, helping me maintain a sense of calm especially on a busy day.

– London Film Academy participant

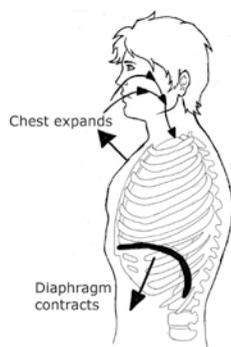
**Top Tips**

- > When working on the body, you are working with muscles, so little and often is best. To develop new habitual use, fifteen minutes per day of gentle stretches and exploring alignment will create new muscular memory.
- > Think about your posture when sitting at the computer, waiting for the tube or bus, driving the car, or watching television. This will create new physical behaviours.
- > Try not to look in the mirror – what you see is often not what is happening in the body. Think about the placement of bones and muscles. Or, if possible work with a partner.
- > Ensure you don't hold your breath when finding alignment as this will create extra tension.
- > Length and width is key when working on alignment; length in spine, length in back of the neck, width in hips and shoulders.

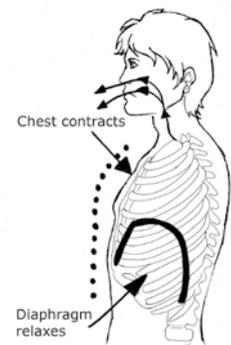
**FREE BREATH
– FUEL**

Emotions and the way we use our body affects our breathing. Breath relies on the body and powers the voice; it is our fuel in the engine. In today's fast paced world; deadlines, targets and presentations create nerves, anxiety and tension which can cause the breath to become shallow and fast.

Actors are required to use their voices evening after evening, filling large spaces. Therefore breathing effectively is the fundamental step to ensure vocal health and the best performance. When thinking about breath, key words are depth and width. If breath is held in the upper chest, this can cause tension in the shoulders, neck and back. This limits the voice, the vocal quality and how you use the voice. The voice can often sound cut off, tight, thin and breathless, lacking confidence and expression. Finding release and allowing the ribs to swing outwards and the lungs to descend, ensures enough breath to power and support the voice.

**In-Breath**

- > As you breathe in, the diaphragm moves down and the ribs move out.
- > The lungs follow this movement as a lining around the lungs creates a suction between the ribs and diaphragm.
- > As the lungs have expanded, the pressure inside the lungs is less than outside. To equalize the pressure, air rushes into the lungs.

**Out-Breath**

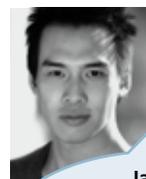
- > The diaphragm relaxes upwards and the ribs downwards and inwards. This compresses the lungs and causes the air to flow outwards.
- > When speaking, depending on how long the thought, the body controls the rate of air flow to allow for enough breath. This is controlled by the ribs slowly releasing downwards and the abdominal muscles pushing the diaphragm upwards.

Top Tips

- > It is important that during the in-breath, the abdominal muscles can relax so the diaphragm can descend and the air can reach the bottom of the lungs.
- > Tense abdominal muscles inhibit the movement of the lungs, so gently rub the belly to keep it loose and free.
- > In order for the ribs to move easily, posture needs to be long and wide. Unnecessary tension in the body hinders the workings of the rib muscles.
- > Don't push the breath. Forcing the breath can cause tension.
- > When breathing, again you are working with muscles, so practice effective breathing for fifteen minutes per day. This means when stepping into a stressful or nervous situation your breath remains centred by habit.
- > Practice breathing lying on the floor, gravity will help you.

**Emily:**

Throughout the exercises try not to let the shoulders and the upper part of the chest move. Concentrate on releasing the stomach, allowing it to gently move outwards on the in-breath and back towards the spine on the out-breath.

**Jason:**

When working on resonance you can be really playful. Have fun with the exercises.

Business Professional:

The resonance work made my voice sound richer.

– Brent Business Venture participant

**FREE RESONANCE
– QUALITY OF PERFORMANCE**

Resonance develops vocal range and enriches the vocal palate building depth, energy, flexibility and focus into the voice. Having this suppleness and control over the sound enhances the dynamics of the pitch range, ability to express emotions and communicate effectively. The speaker is able to respond to the demands of the language, circumstance and space with ease.

You can feel resonance through the vibrations in your body when sounding. Initially, vibrations can be found within the mouth and throat – the chamber holding the sound. Further physical sensations can be felt throughout the body.

Exercises

- 1)** Siren through your range on a /ng/, as found in the word /sing/ and then into vowels such as /ee/ and /oo/. To do this, start on a comfortable pitch and glide up and down your range. Do not push the voice.
- 2)** Paint an imaginary picture using your voice. Envisage a life size empty canvas in front of you, or all around you. Begin to paint with your invisible brush using swirls, splashes, strokes and detailed colour. As you do this, allow your voice to mirror the colour, texture and action of the drawing. The lightness of the colour may represent the quality of the sound, the mood may also represent the tone and pitch of the voice.

Top Tips

- > Release the jaw when you hum as a clenched jaw will limit the quality of the voice.
- > Take time to breathe before you release on sound. A full breath with depth and width will allow for more vibrations.
- > Don't push the voice too high or too low. Gently explore your range.

Business Professional:

I have had concerns about my voice and articulation for many years, so this was the right course for me. I think I'll improve a lot based on what I learnt in the training.

– Refugee Council participant

Business Professional:

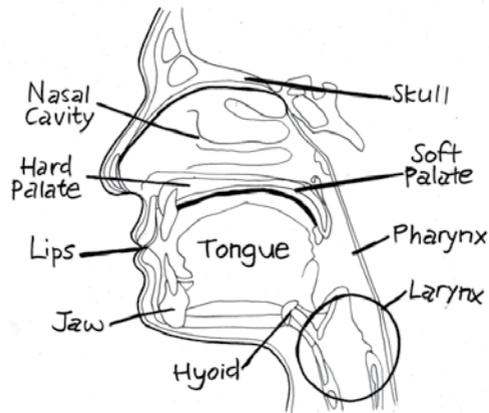
These practical exercises are excellent! I would definitely attend similar events in the future.

– Managers in Partnership participant

FREE ARTICULATION – SPECIFICITY OF PERFORMANCE

Articulation is the fifth fundamental aspect to good communication. The aim of good articulation is to ensure words are easily understood with clarity, conviction and proficiency. Articulators influence the shape of the vocal tract which can create faulty diction if used inefficiently.

The tongue, lips, mandible (jaw) and velum (soft palate) are all mobile articulators, meaning they have the ability to move to create a variety of configurations for speech sounds. The pharynx (back of the mouth), alveolar ridge (behind the top teeth) and hard palate are immobile articulators.



Tongue – creates precise muscular movements, shortening, curling, narrowing and moving the tip.

Lips – composed largely of tissue, blood vessels, glands, nerves and muscles.

Soft Palate/Velum – allows for nasal sounds when dropped and oral sounds when elevated. Failure of the velum to create a tight closure impedes nasal quality.

Jaw – primary movement of the jaw is to chew food however it can contribute to speech by adjusting the size of the vocal tract.

**Amanda:**

From experience, once body, breath and voice work is complete, articulation gives you that final impact.

Exercises

- 1) Massage the jaw, starting from the ears, down the jaw line and around the mouth. Finally yawn to open the back of the pharynx and jaw.
- 2) Stick out the tongue as far as possible. Rotate the tongue in circles, stretch to the left, right, ceiling and floor.
- 3) Blow through your lips like a horse. First just on breath and then on sound, gliding through your vocal range.
- 4) Choose a few tongue twisters and repeat them with clarity and increase pace.

Top Tips

- > Use convenient times in the day to practice articulation, for example when in the shower or driving you can blow through the lips, say tongue twisters and stretch the tongue. Whilst watching television gently massage the jaw, stretch and yawn.
- > Ensure you warm up the articulators before an interview, meeting or presentation. This will stop you stumbling over words and ensure the best clarity in your performance.
- > If you have a presentation, read through your text slowly, over exaggerating the words. This will ensure the language sits in your muscularity creating more clarity, ease and familiarity with the text.

**Emily:**

Be aware of your personal reaction to nervous situations. People hold nerves in different places. Find out where this is.... Shoulders? Knees? Jaw?

Business Professional:

I get nervous speaking in public but the exercises made me feel confident. It helped me interact with people and helped me get to know others well.

– Royal Holloway University of London participant

Business Professional:

Merely relaxing and being aware of habitual tensions can improve a message dramatically.

– Devilishly Handsome Productions participant

CONQUERING NERVES – DON'T STALL

When nervous, the body undergoes a 'fight or flight' response: an ancient, protective mechanism in human behaviour, alerting the body to any impending danger. Although we no longer need to hunt for food or face the enemy, we still carry this natural response within us which is triggered off in anxious situations, such as, speaking in public or job interviews. The body alerts us to danger through the production of certain physical symptoms: sweaty palms, butterflies in the stomach, nausea, shaking legs or hands, loss of focus when speaking, clenching jaw and fists, unable to make eye contact, stumbling over words, feeling unable to breathe and a dry mouth. All aspects that an actor must overcome to give the best performance.

It is important to remember that nerves are also positive, they show that you care. However, none of these factors are helpful when speaking publicly or trying to perform your best at interview, therefore specific awareness is required to overcome and minimise the body's natural response. One of the main techniques to overcome nerves is effective breathing. When we are nervous, we tend to either hold the breath or breathe higher in the body which is effortful chest breathing.

In a training context, participants can explore effective breathing techniques that calm nerves and reduce tension. Tension can easily be transmitted to the audience so it is important to develop strategies to manage your state. As a result, this ensures that sound quality and vocal performance can be flexible and emotional. Remember, tension murders sound quality. With a little practice you can win the fight against nerves and portray a more confident you.

Top Tips

- > As long as you are aware of what is happening to you physically, you can start to make changes.
- > Imagine that you have roots going through the soles of the feet, through the foundations of the building and down into the earth below. This will ground you.

SECTION TWO

IN THE WORKPLACE

- > Have positive thoughts instead of negative ones. Tell yourself how good you are at public speaking and how much you enjoy it!
- > Return to alignment exercises and practice before the big day. This will help to release tension.
- > Breathing can help get endorphins, the positive hormones, into the system.
- > Practice and prepare your presentation to build your confidence and keep your nerves at bay.
- > Simply placing one hand on the belly can encourage and remind you to breathe effectively and thereby calm your nerves.
- > Close your eyes and remember a relaxing place and just breathe!

**Jason:**

When training individuals in this subject area I always start with alignment. How you sit in the interview will demonstrate status and confidence as well as impact on your breathing and vocal use.

INTERVIEW SKILLS – GETTING INTO THE DRIVING SEAT

Using actor training methodologies can give you the skill set to make a great first impression, explore exercises to combat nerves which may otherwise inhibit a confident interview, as well as increase flexibility in communication to ensure you meet the demands of the interview process, thus increasing employability.

Interviews do not have to be a frightening experience, having the right skills will allow you to demonstrate composure and confidence. Interviews require the three 'Ps': Prepare, Practice and Perform.

Prepare

- > Before attending the interview ensure you research the organisation.
- > Re-read your application and be familiar with the job description.
- > Ensure that you have copies of the necessary certification required as well as a copy of your CV.
- > Make sure you know how to get to the organisation and aim to get there twenty minutes or so before your interview. On arrival inform the receptionist.

Business Professional:

The interview skills training allowed me to focus on key communication tips that will have a positive impact on my future career.

– Shaw Trust participant

- > When you are met by a member of HR make positive small talk as you walk towards the interview room (studies reveal this has a positive impact).
- > Ensure that your physical presentation is formal and smart, rather than casual.

Practice

- > The questions asked in interviews tend to take a standard form and knowing what sorts of questions you will be asked in advance will enable you to rehearse and practice your responses.
- > Rehearse your likely responses with a trusted friend or colleague and aim for clarity, brevity and honesty in your replies.
- > When constructing your replies – remember to concentrate on the employer's needs; emphasise how you can help their organisation achieve their goal, describing past abilities, skills, accomplishments.

Perform

- > Being invited for interview already means they feel you have enough experience and knowledge for the role. Your interviewers are trying to find out if you are the right candidate professionally and personally.
- > Throughout the interview, remember that it is not always the question itself that matters, nor your response: it is what the answer reveals about you that they most want to know.
- > It is vital that your chosen replies are constructive and upbeat. Endeavour to be as honest as possible but find a way of putting a positive spin on any difficult circumstances.
- > One of the most important rules is to not speak badly about any previous employers or work colleagues. Talk about your knowledge, experience and skills.

Top Tips

- > Warm up your voice; carry out breathing and humming exercises to prepare your voice so it works for you during the interview.
- > Exercise the tongue, lips and rest of the face using simple tongue twisters and gentle massage. You will come across with clarity in the interview.

- > Establish appropriate eye contact and speak to all the interviewers on the panel, not just the person asking questions.
- > State clearly your name and make sure you have heard the names of the interviewer(s). Do use interviewer names if you are comfortable.
- > Keep breathing deeply – this will help you to remain calm and confident.
- > Either use your hands to add interest to your speech or keep them firmly on your lap. Be aware of any nervous fidgeting you do and find a way to keep it under control.
- > Give yourself time to answer questions. There are no prizes for answering straight away. If you don't understand the question, ask the interviewer to explain exactly what they mean.
- > Don't claim to know things or to have done things that you haven't. If an interviewer suspects you are making things up, they are unlikely to select you - it is fine to talk about how eager you are to learn!

**Emily:**

During the presentation forget about the practice exercises. Perform 'in the moment' and your preparation will come into play naturally.

PRESENTATION SKILLS – DRIVING PERFORMANCE

The art of public speaking and presentation skills is an identical framework to an actor's performance; the individual must capture the listener, connect with the words, take the audience on a journey and create impact. Actor training techniques can give you the secret ingredients to a pain free, confident presentation.

You may have heard actors ask: 'What is my motivation?' An actor, when playing a role, will often have a clear motivation/objective or goal. This objective will drive all his actions and words and motivate him throughout the play. It also serves to maintain the actor's focus on the character (instead of on himself), those around him and the immediacy of the circumstances. By having an objective, the actor is liberated from negative thoughts about himself such as 'the audience hate me, no one laughed!' and instead focuses on the effect he would like to have on the other characters.

Business Professional:

By the final presentation we were feeling confident, charged and ready to experiment.

– *Ingeus participant*

Business Professional:

Presenting is one of my greatest fears and I was pleased with what I achieved. Big hurdle for me to overcome.

– *Knowledge Connect participant*

This same technique can be used in business. When delivering a presentation, although you do not have a character, you do have a role. If you focus your attention on the purpose of your presentation and the effect that you would like to have on the audience, rather than have negative, destructive thoughts about yourself and how bad you think you are at public speaking, you will be free to succeed!

Delivering an effective presentation means bringing all the tools and techniques, already described, together for an all rounded performance: free body, breath, resonance and articulation. Content is of course important in a presentation so the best thing to do is to plan and to practice. By being prepared, you will feel more confident and will communicate more effectively. Clients often write out the content of their presentation but rarely do they practice. Practice must be done on your feet and using your voice. Why not rehearse in front of a mirror so you can observe your own habits for yourself? Remember, practicing a presentation in your head whilst on the bus or in the car will not help you to speak in public.

Six Steps to Presentation Skills

Presence – Good speakers are grounded and have presence. They do not need to move around. You should make sure you feel comfortable standing still and addressing the audience. If you feel you need to move, make sure it is for a reason as unnecessary movement can distract the audience.

Clarity – Use articulation exercises to make sure you are clear with your words and phrases. The more you commit to your consonants, the more enthusiastic you will seem about your message. Make sure you speak at a suitable pace so that the audience can follow your speech. Take time to breathe between thoughts and subject change to prevent you from speeding up.

Eye contact – Remember to establish eye contact with members of the audience at key points in your speech. Try to make sure you look at everyone during the presentation so the whole audience feels included. This will give you focus.

Gesture – Gestures that demonstrate how strongly you feel about topics in your speech will help to engage the audience but too much gesturing can be distracting. To find the right balance, simple techniques can include, releasing one hand at a time to gesture on key words or linking your fingers together to avoid fidgeting.

Rhythm and Pause – Pick out key words or phrases that you want to emphasise in your speech and practice delivering these lines. Divide the content into separate sections and make sure you pause between these sections in your speech. This will signal to the audience that they should listen carefully for the next ‘thought’ as well as give you a variety of rhythms.

Range – We all have a pitch range (how high or low the voice is). Make sure your presentation is not all at the same pitch, otherwise it will sound monotone (the same sound all the way through). In conversation, we tend to use a variety of pitch, pace and volume. Try to consciously include this vocal variety in your presentation. This will make it more interesting for the listeners.

Volume/Projection – Remember to practice your presentation in the space you will be using (or a similar sized room) to make sure you have the appropriate volume. Remember to speak loud enough so that those sitting at the back can hear you clearly. A technique that will help here is speaking out to the back wall of the room.

Top Tips

- > Fail to plan, plan to fail.
- > Enjoy the opportunity!
- > Emphasise your key words and messages by either using more volume, pausing before or after a key word or change in pitch.
- > Create performance energy so that you seem enthused about your subject. Try this by running up and down on the spot for ten seconds before you enter the space.
- > Imagine you are a doctor’s skeleton hanging from a coat hanger, all the bones falling in line on top of one another. You should now feel relaxed and rooted to the floor (grounded).



Amanda:

Each time you practice continue to tweak and develop the content of information. This will keep it fresh and emotional. Repetition creates a monotonous voice.

Business Professional:

This workshop made me feel confident ... and helped me to understand the discipline of pitching.

– Royal Holloway University of London participant

NETWORKING SKILLS – FINDING YOUR ROUTE

Developing your skills in communication and presenting will make you a natural at networking – it is the balance of these skill sets. However it requires an additional step of the ‘other’, your potential client. The focus is your client and not the self. Making the right impact and developing rapport is integral to ensure a client-centred outcome and collaborative relationship.

So, how do you network effectively? Preparation for networking is key. Prepare your pitch and practice your voice and breathing exercises prior to the event so you focus on business and not yourself during the evening. Further preparation can be carried out through research. Generally, a list of attendees is available before the event. Take time researching the organisations you wish to target; look at who they are and the potential need for your service. Don’t work on assumption. You must be able to see the world through their point of view.

During interaction, be interested and listen. This will affect the quality of the relationship and develop mutual respect and curiosity. In order to do this, a Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) technique known as ‘matching and mirroring’ can be used. This is a subtle practice that creates a more harmonious relationship, generating an appeal of likeness and ease.

To match and mirror, think about:

Voice – listen to the quality, tone, pace and clarity.

Movement – observe the quality of general movement; fast, slow, direct or indirect.

Body language – identify the use of eye contact, posture and gesture.

During conversation gently alter your style to blend with their’s. Mutual respect and ease will be formed.

Elevator Pitch

Within each rapport you will need to pitch your business or service, therefore you will require an elevator pitch. An elevator pitch allows thirty seconds to grab your listener’s attention and make your impact.

Business Professional:

Networking was very interesting, especially the techniques we learnt. Very useful and helped with my confidence.

– King's College London participant

When pitching you need to focus on the key questions customers ask:

- > Why should I choose your business/service?
- > What are the benefits of me buying from you?

The elevator pitch must include:

- > Your name and company name.
- > What you do.
- > Your unique selling point.
- > How you can compliment and benefit their organisation.
- > How they can find out more.

The skills required for pitching are very similar to those required for presenting. When pitching, it is very important to have a clear motivation in order to have impact and clarity. You need to sound enthusiastic, however ensure that you don't become pushy and 'sell'. In this instance, the voice sounds forced and over loud and you start leaning forward, thereby invading the space of the potential client and alienating them. You can avoid this by believing in your product or service and remain grounded. Remember, to be grounded you need to explore good alignment, find a connection with the floor so you feel rooted as well as ensure effective, calm breathing. This will naturally allow the voice to stay connected with colour and clarity.

Top Tips

- > Be armed with your business cards and elevator pitch.
- > Don't be vague and use jargon.
- > Don't sell but share.
- > Use your OWN words and OWN them. This will give more emotion, colour and clarity behind language.
- > Sign post the competitive advantage.
- > Focus your energy on the client.
- > Be sincere and enthusiastic.

**Jason:**

An actor's training can teach participants the vital skills of rapport and interaction, the meaning of language and body language.

Business Professional:

The work on communication was very helpful - especially how to defuse a difficult situation.

– Working Asian Business Forum participant

CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS – TRAFFIC CONTROL

The skills required for customer service can be adapted for any business sector or interaction with any client. The requirements are very similar. The key aspect for customer service is that whatever the customer's approach, whether friendly, neutral or confrontational, your response to them must be flexible and dynamic; balancing listening, questioning, responding and resolving. In your role you must have awareness and flexibility to deal with customers so everyone 'gets their needs met'.

The voice has a demonstrable affect on interaction and customer relations. Knowing how to use your vocal tone, pace and clarity can assist in achieving targets whilst maximising the customer experience, whether over the telephone or in person. Additionally, awareness of status and developing effective presence and relations with colleagues and customers will work towards achieving your goals and targets.

Top Tips

- > First impressions count, therefore think about your opening statement/welcome. This will make an impact on how the customer feels towards you. As the conversation develops try to strike a balance between listening, empathising and directing to get their needs and your targets met.
- > Use open ended questions; who, how, what, where, when and why to ensure you find the best product or service for them.
- > Link sale at every opportunity. If you recommend five options they are likely to purchase three. It's not always less is more.
- > Leave time for the customer to think and digest the information. Breaking moments of silence may lose a sale. Filling silence can also make you seem desperate.
- > Ensure you have a 'can do' attitude at all times. This will keep motivation and help to drive sales.

**Amanda:**

Remember, body, breath and voice work together so don't just focus on one area of practice.

FINAL THOUGHTS – REACHING YOUR DESTINATION

A confident communicator uses their body, breath and voice with minimum effort, brought together through regular practice to give optimum effect. A confident communicator is free of stress and physical tension and is able to focus on their audience rather than themselves. This makes the individual seem natural, relaxed and confident with the adaptability and flexibility for varied communication styles depending on the situation, whether it be networking, pitching, presenting or in an interview.

The basic, innate functions of breathing, speaking and moving are often taken for granted. Throughout life we can over use and under use our natural potential. The skills outlined in this toolkit demonstrate how you can rekindle your optimum body, breath and vocal use for maximum impact and business success. Through simple steps, practiced on a regular basis significant improvements can be noticed in a short period of time.

Remember, communicating confidently is not just *what* you say but *how* you say it.

**Emily:**

The fundamental step for effective communication is awareness. From here you can develop and progress very quickly.

SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – COURSES AND TRAINING

Bespoke Training Courses

To suit our clients' needs we frequently build bespoke sessions. At Central, we have a rich resource of actors, designers, directors and trainers who can put together imaginative and innovative training programmes. We can deliver training at the Embassy Theatre site if your team would benefit from the creativity and change of perspective that a drama school environment can provide – or we can deliver training at a location of your choice.

We recognise that businesses get the most out of training when it is designed with them in mind. When you come to us with a training requirement we make sure that we undertake a thorough briefing and then design a training proposal that fits the training needs of your organisation – and fits into your training budget. We will make sure

**Jason:**

Communication is reciprocal and every encounter is different. These skills will give you the flexibility for any situation.

that you get exactly the training that you need and will hand-pick an expert team of trainers, actors and facilitators who can deliver it to your requirements. We believe that the best training is tailored to fit.

One-to-one Training

Our highly qualified voice, speech and communication coaches can help you unlock your potential and develop your voice, speech and/or body language. They can work with you on areas such as elocution, voice power, confidence in communication, presentation skills, public speaking, networking, accent softening, dialects and spoken skills.

One-to-one sessions are completely tailored to your needs. The first session also works as an initial consultation, in which you and your coach will discuss your training needs, look at your strengths and the areas you wish to develop. Your coach will design a bespoke programme outlining these key areas and suggest a training schedule to allow you to achieve your objectives. A typical programme may involve four to six one hour sessions, depending on your needs. You will receive a detailed session summary with training recommendations and will be provided with support materials, where relevant.

Clients who have benefited from one-to-one coaching include senior civil servants, TV journalists, bridegrooms, councillors, management consultants, barristers, city traders, advertising executives, models, doctors and job applicants. One-to-one sessions can be an extremely useful addition to our courses as they give valuable personal feedback.

CONTACT US

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