Building Your Voice Command

As a speaker and presenter, your most powerful and valuable asset is your voice. The cultivation of a strong, confident and sincere voice should be one of your main priorities. By following the techniques outlined in this paper, you will be well on your way to creating a dynamic voice that gets attention, inspires confidence and compels action.

The Importance of Voice Projection and Control

Voice projection relates to your ability to be heard loud and clear across the room. Whether you have a microphone or not is irrelevant; volume and the ability to control it will greatly enhance the impression others have of your confidence and poise.

Your ability to project depends on your mood, posture and breathing. Here we will address breathing and posture.

Breathing

The appropriate form of breathing is called “Diaphragmatic Breathing,” or quite simply, “breathing from the stomach.” To achieve your best voice quality and projection, breathing diaphragmatically is absolutely essential. Most people breathe from their chest during waking hours, so this type of breathing will require some practice before becoming second nature.

Breathing Exercise

Lie down on your back. Put your hands on your stomach. As you breathe in, your hands should expand and rise with your stomach. When you exhale, your hand should return to the resting position. Inhale and exhale to the count of five, and increase this number as you improve. With average lung capacity, inhaling and exhaling to a slow count of 10 is good. Focus on inhaling and exhaling, watching your hands rise and fall.

Variations:

- Make noise on inhaling, pucker your lips and suck the air in.
- Inhale through your nose, keeping your mouth completely closed.
- Make noise on the exhaling or whistle as the air goes out.
- Put your hands behind your head, elbows out to the sides. This will expand your lungs even more.
- Add weights to your stomach.

Did you know that 38 percent of our believability and the way we are perceived is based on our voice, which includes projection, inflection, and rate?
**Projection Exercise: Reading Out Loud**

- Select a book or article, preferably on a topic that you would actually speak on, and begin reading.
- Speak slowly. If you rush, you are much more likely to slur your words.
- Open your mouth. Do not be afraid to show your teeth (literally). Be sure to take care of your teeth so you won’t be afraid to open your mouth wide.
- Keep your tongue down. Unless you are using your tongue to articulate a certain sound, keep it “glued” to the inside edge of your lower front teeth. This lets more sound escape your mouth.
- Lift up your soft palate. This is the soft part in the back of the roof of your mouth. You will let more sound escape your mouth by doing so.
- Stand up straight. This allows you to breathe better. Sound is created by the air being forced out of your lungs, so the clearer your breathing, the clearer your speech.
- Record yourself reading. Listen to it after each reading. Continue to move the recorder away from you for subsequent readings to see how far away you can project your voice while ensuring it remains strong and clear.

**Posture**

How you stand or sit will impact the power of your voice. Consider stage singers as an example. They stand very straight, especially when they are singing difficult songs. This is because they can not afford to have anything blocking the flow of air from their diaphragm to their throat. It is the same with speaking.

- The most desirable posture for speaking is standing straight with shoulders back and hands at your sides.
- If you must be seated for your presentation, be sure to sit up straight with your back off your chair and your arms resting in front of you on the table.

**Posture / Vocal Warm-up Exercise: Vowels**

A good way to practice correct posture while warming up your vocal chords is by reciting vowels.

- Stretch your neck comfortably upward.
- Repeat A E I O U, let your voice trail off after each vowel, especially the U.
- You may find yourself doing this in a sing-song voice; that’s good.
- Repeat 15–20 times.

**Variations:**
- To observe the difference in your voice quality, move your head up and down to hear the changes; slouch, lean or twist in a way that reduces the quality of your posture.

Note: a side benefit to excellent posture is that you will look and feel more confident!!
Communicating with Clarity

When it comes to voice control, communicating clearly refers to how well you are able to enunciate or articulate your words. Enunciation is a vital part of speaking clearly. No one will understand what you are saying if you run your words together and mumble. This is especially important for actors, public speakers, singers, and anyone who must communicate verbally with others on a regular basis.

People who have grown up in various parts of the country or world have muscles trained in ways that make it difficult for some people to understand them. If you have a strong accent (relative to your audiences), stretching and retraining your mouth muscles may be necessary. However, enunciation is something all speakers should work on, regardless of accents.

Enunciation Exercise #1: Consonant Sounds
This helps your mouth become accustomed to forming each consonant/vowel pairing.

- Bah Baw (there is a difference between “ah” and “aw”)
  Bay Beh Bee Bih Bl Boo BO (long ‘o’ sound) Buh Byoo
- Cah Caw Cay Ceh Cee Cih CI Coo CO Cuh Cyoo
- Follow this pattern with all of the consonants.

Enunciation Exercise #2: Tongue Twisters
Recite and repeat the following phrases, going progressively faster each time. Make sure to articulate clearly.

1. Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?
2. Freshly fried flying fish.
3. She stood on the balcony, inexplicably mimicking him hiccupping, and amicably welcoming him home.
4. Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager imagining managing an imaginary menagerie.
5. The epitome of femininity.
6. A skunk sat on a stump and thunk the stump stunk, but the stump thunk the skunk stunk.
7. How much wood would a woodchuck chuck, If a woodchuck could chuck wood? He would chuck, he would, as much as he could, And chuck as much as a woodchuck would, If a woodchuck could chuck wood.

Excelerate has helped countless executives, business owners and others accomplish their personal goals – from building solid presentation skills to mitigating conflict in the workplace. No matter your issue, remember that good communication is always a part of the solution.

Contact Excelerate today for more information.