



VOICE *of* INFLUENCE

How to get people to love to listen to you

Judy Apps

Voice of Influence

*How to get people to love
to listen to you*

Judy Apps

Illustrations by Helen Clare Brienza



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Prologue

Gavin is in full flow. He excels at meetings. With his robust confident tones he easily takes charge as he numbers off the various problems besetting the company's publicity department in the current climate.

"There's the question of time frames," he explains. "By the time we've got everything settled, especially budgets, and launched our campaign, we're already into a different ball game: three months have gone and the market's already changed. That's exactly what Stephen said at the board last month."

June chips in with a couple of corrections: detail person June, always ready to put in her oar with a correction or a precise question or complaint: "I don't think that was *exactly* what the chair of the board said, was it Gavin? I think you'll find he mentioned two months, not three. It *is* the meeting *three* weeks ago you're talking about, isn't it?"

"Thank you June," says Bob easily, and goes on to the next point.

"It's all hopeless," grumbles Angela, "unless Finance stop being so tight-fisted, we're not going to get things off the ground at all. Someone's got to tell them they're standing in the way of this company's progress."

"Yes, that's right," agrees Raj. "Someone's got to tell them!"

Jim is sitting there observing them all. They have been around this scenario several times before. Something clearly needs to be done, and fairly fast, but all they do is talk. He's been thinking about the issue quite a lot himself, and has come to the conclusion that what's needed is a quicker way of getting to people; that is greater use of the internet and less time and money spent on long publicity campaigns that are out of date by the time they have come to fruition. The time has come for him to explain what he's been thinking but it's hard to get a word in edgeways at these meetings.

Everyone has so much to say and so little desire to listen to anyone else.

Still, it's what's needed, so he takes a grip of himself and waits for a gap to tell the others his idea. At last there's a brief pause and he takes his chance. "We need to start using the internet more," he blurts out rapidly. "Other companies have found it really successful. If we start spending money on Google Ads, we can monitor our results and use our budget in a really controlled way."

Angela glances at him, but June interrupts: "Don't talk to me about budgets. We've been waiting since April for a final confirmation of last year's figures and we need to speak to Peter about the reasons for the delay. I emailed him about it on the 5th, but he replied on the 7th that more time was needed. If we could just pin Peter down, we would be able to sort it ..."

"Right, if I can continue," announces Gavin. "So, to sum up, the main problems as I see it are ..."

Jim slumps back in his chair thinking to himself, "No one listens to me. I sometimes wonder why I bother to turn up at all."

The meeting proceeds on its erratic course.

Ten minutes later, Angela puts both hands out on the table. "This", she announces in firm tones, arms out straight, "requires a radical—a *radical*—rethink. And what is needed", she continues confidently, "is something really different." She looks around.

"So I've been thinking." Everyone turns towards her expectantly.

She waits for their attention. "We need to work *quickly*, be more *responsive* to the market."

She pauses for effect, and then pronounces enthusiastically, "What we need is *Google Ads!*"

"*Google Ads!* You're right!" exclaims Gavin. "That's it! We need to use the internet more."

“Well, at last we have a really sound suggestion,” approves June.
“Great idea, eh, Jim?”

Jim bites his lip.

“This one will work,” agrees Raj. “Good one, Angela.”

“So we’re all decided then,” declares Gavin. “Look into more internet publicity, low budget, responsive, highly effective. Thanks Angela, I really think you’ve hit the jackpot there!”

* * *

I walk through the imposing portals of Sotheby’s, the great auction house of London. I am carrying a violin which used to be my grandfather’s. Its case is heavy and wooden, shaped like a coffin with the handle on the lid. The scuffing suggests much use; it has been played in military academies, in smoke-filled rooms, in the cinema for silent films. I want to know its value. But this building is intimidating and its processes unclear. I approach the reception with its high desk almost taller than I am. An official turns his eyes towards me without interest and gazes impassively.

I clear my throat. “Hmm, excuse me, I’d like ...” My voice comes out pinched and high. “Er, that is, I’d like ...”

And then I bring to mind for a moment my journey from timid young woman to someone who knows what she is about. I find my voice. It suddenly breaks out, deep and loud, and resonates around the grand hall: “I’d like to have a valuation on this violin, please.”

The official is suddenly all attention and respect: “Certainly, madam! If you’d kindly follow me, I’ll find one of our experts to attend to you! Er ... have you come far?” And we enter into the heart of the building side by side.

Chapter Five

Relax!

Don't underestimate the value of Doing Nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering.

Pooh's Little Instruction Book, inspired by A. A. Milne

Good breathing is dependent on the flexibility and elasticity of the body. When you use your voice well you will feel relaxed, particularly around the area of the shoulders, neck and jaw. Your voice will sound free if your body feels free.

If you find that your voice does not project as much as you would like, tension is nearly always a major factor. It can feel counter-intuitive: you may feel that you have to push the sound out more forcefully in order to be heard, but the reverse is true. You need to relax more, to give your resonators a chance to ring. You will learn more about how to speak loudly in Chapter 8.

I possess a pair of Indian cymbals that I use to gain people's attention in courses. When you hold the metal tightly in each hand and clash them together, the resulting sound is a dead "tack" of metal against metal. But if you hold the cymbals loosely by their strings and touch them together, the ringing sound is surprisingly loud, travels far and always surprises people with its clarity, resonance and beauty of tone.

Your body is your resounding instrument, and like the cymbals needs to be free for the sound to ring through you. Relaxing your body releases your voice, and releases your mind and your whole being at the same time.

The opposite is also true. Tensing your body tenses your mind. Not only is your voice inhibited but your ability to listen is as well. You might have had the experience of tensing up with fear when you speak in public. When that happens, you hear your voice going

tighter and higher in pitch, which is in itself anxiety-making, and your mind also becomes tense and unable to think clearly. Your “heart comes into your mouth”. When this happens you can find yourself trapped in an escalating spiral of performance anxiety. When you release, you are more able to give out and to receive: you open up true communication. Be aware that relaxation is not the same as slump: there is still vital energy running through you.

Some tension in the body may be the temporary effect of a stressful day or too much time spent hunched up before a computer screen. Some tension however, as we have seen, is habitual, a result of holding yourself in a particular way for years, often from childhood, as a defence against life’s traumas.

In *Bioenergetics*, Alexander Lowen cites three areas of obstruction to the voice. The first is the mouth which prevents the inner self from expressing itself by being clamped shut with compressed lips and tight jaw. The second is the junction of the head and the neck where we swallow. This area guards against being forced to “swallow” anything unacceptable and against any feelings being expressed that may be unacceptable. The third is the junction of the neck and the thorax which guards the opening to the chest and the heart, and so prevents feelings from being expressed audibly.

These obstructions are physical but were installed by mental tensions. You can unblock them by relaxing physically *and* by addressing the mental obstacles. Mind and body are inextricably linked. This connection demonstrates itself beautifully when, as you learn to relax parts of your body that are accustomed to being tense, some of your life problems and blocks also begin to drop away.

So relaxation has much going for it, and especially with regard to the voice. So let’s find ways to release tensions in the body.

Posture, physiology

How beautiful it is to do nothing, and then to rest afterward.

Spanish proverb

Throat resonance – permission to speak

My voice stuck in my throat.

Virgil, *The Aeneid*

When someone close to you talks fairly quietly you can hear the sound resonating in the area of their throat. When we speak louder, this resonance is no longer sufficient and we need to use more body resonance to avoid forcing the voice.

Do you sometimes feel the need to clear your throat when you have to talk in public? Or your throat feels constricted? Tension in the throat is one of the first symptoms of anxiety. Nerves make you tighten up around the shoulders as you draw yourself in for protection, and this causes the voice to become higher and tighter. When you hear this happening to your voice, you may fear loss of control and feel even more anxious, and a vicious circle is created. We are back to learning how to relax ...

If you have any difficulty in projecting your voice, the throat is usually the place where you sense an inhibition. This can be the effect of the anxiety of the moment but can also be due to chronic tension. If you have built into your psyche certain imperatives, for example, "Never cry", "Don't sing, you sound awful", "Stop showing off", it is quite likely that this presents itself physically as a block in your throat, preventing you from being spontaneous. If then you wish to voice sorrow, joy, laughter or anger in a spontaneous way, you may find that the ability is no longer accessible to you, until you teach yourself how to again.

Sometimes, just an indefinable low level fear holds you back. It may be a sense of, "I can't" or "I'm not good enough". This feeling of being blocked at the throat is in our language: "He felt choked up", "There was a lump in her throat", "The words stuck in her throat", "He felt gagged".

Giving yourself permission to express yourself from your throat literally means "to find your voice". Releasing your throat feels like giving way to more expression of yourself on the inside, and will certainly increase your range of vocal expression on the

outside. It can also be accompanied by the release of emotions that were hidden to you before.

Mary's story

Mary never felt she counted in her family. She was an “after-thought”, the child born years after her family with two older siblings was “complete”. She remembers how she was aware as a young child that she held the rest of the family back from exciting outings on holidays by not being old enough to manage the activities. A very quiet child, she always sought to fit in with the wishes of the rest of her family as much as she could.

Mary always had problems in getting herself heard. In middle life, she went on a voice course and successfully recovered her voice from all the tension around her throat. She cried as she rediscovered her voice. I asked her what made the difference during the course, and she replied, “It was discovering that I had the right to be me.”

“I never realised that I had a right to exist,” she confessed. “And now, I know that I do!”

Open the breathing channel

Just drop your head easily back, open your mouth and stick out your tongue, and breathe in and out with your mouth in the “aaah” position. Feel the direct connection between the sky and your breathing place in your belly (diaphragm) without the throat getting in the way. Now say “haaa” as you breathe out, and feel how the sound comes right up from your body. After a few times, move your head back to its normal position and repeat the “haaa”, maintaining the same feeling as before.

Opening the door of the throat

Imagine that there is a double door located at the back of your neck in the throat area which opens towards the front of your throat. Take

Chapter Nine

How can I sound more confident?

Life is too short to be little. Man is never so manly as when he feels deeply, acts boldly, and expresses himself with frankness and with fervour.

Benjamin Disraeli

You will find material throughout this book to help you increase your confidence as a speaker. In this chapter, we look particularly at specific easy techniques that will make a marked difference to your general feeling of confidence and in how you come across.

People often want to be able to speak with more authority, gravitas or maturity. These abilities all stem from confidence and you will learn these skills in this chapter too.

Well-balanced posture

We have talked before about posture and basic relaxation. Standing or sitting in a confident way instantly makes you look like someone to be reckoned with and makes you feel more confident inside. The balanced posture also gives your voice the best base for good sound. Remember to take a good breath and feel the air enter your whole body. As you breathe out, release your jaw and facial muscles, drop your elbows and every part of your body.

Your breath is always moving and a well-balanced posture is not static. Once you stick in a posture, you become rigid. As you stand, feel the constant small adjustment of your feet to balance, feel your head gently leading your body upwards towards the ceiling. Feel also your back broadening in width. It's a subtle sensation of expansion.

This language of lengthening and broadening is used in the Alexander Technique, much practised by singers, musicians and actors. F. M. Alexander, who developed the technique, was a Shakespearian actor who developed chronic laryngitis while working as a performer. Embarking on a journey of self-discovery to cure his voice, he worked out ways to lengthen the spine and free compression in the neck area, and further, restore the balance of the whole body. Following his advice, you can restore natural posture and through release of tension gain a new feeling of calm and confidence.

From a tall, relaxed place, imagine yourself speaking from your body rather than from your head. Feel relaxation spread through you and allow your whole body to be part of the action.

Strong emphasis

Confident speakers use strong emphasis to great effect. So it will be good news that increasing your emphasis is really easy. Emphasis is a feature more of some languages than others. When you listen to French or Italian, the sentences glide along smoothly, even when the speaker gets passionate or agitated. English speakers sound far more heavily emphatic. If an Italian speaker wants to stress a particular word, he lengthens the syllable. The assured English speaker lands on certain words with a heavy stress and sails easily over the others. The stressed words are always the most important words in terms of *content*. Confident speakers stress these particular words more strongly than unconfident speakers.

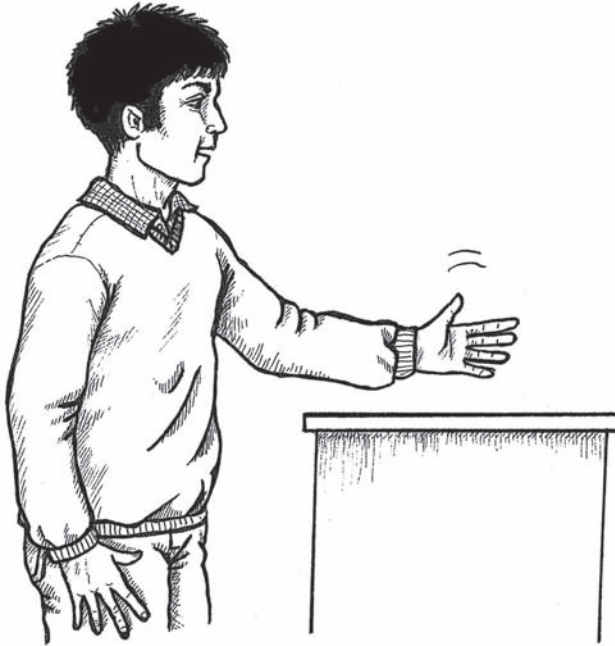
Try it out in the following lines:

This above **all**: to thine **own self** be **true**,
And it must **follow**, as the **night** the **day**,
Thou **canst** not **then** be **false** to **any** man.

or in a business example:

The **new** strategy has **important** implications in terms of **time**
and **money**.

If when you practise you make a hand gesture with each emphasis it helps you to be conscious of the impact of the word and to create the strong effect. You don't need to keep the hand gesture as part of your style when you are not practising—unless you really want to!



Listen to commentators and interviewers in the media. If you copy the way they lay the stress on particular words you will probably be surprised by how strong the emphasis feels when you do it yourself. In listening, we are thoroughly used to the effect and probably don't notice it at all.

Stress and meaning

Stress is especially important for bringing out the sense of a sentence, as any change of stress affects the meaning, sometimes fundamentally:

"I'm not going"

(not me; maybe someone else, you, he or she)

Speak more powerfully and influentially

Communicate from the whole of you, and reach people at a deeper level

Find your true voice rather than just speaking with expression

Understand other people better through the sound of their voice

This inspiring book by leading voice coach Judy Apps shows you how to awaken the energy of your authentic voice to speak from head, heart, gut and soul. Bringing together knowledge from voice training, NLP, Aikido, Alexander Technique, Bioenergetics, Feldenkrais and other mind-body work, *Voice of Influence* gives you the means to reach people at a deeper level where you'll motivate and inspire. Through this journey of discovery, you will literally 'find your own voice' in all senses of the phrase.

Valuable insights to the path for personal transformation.

Robert Dilts, developer, author, trainer and consultant in the field NLP

Should be on the reading list of anyone who wants to learn how to communicate more effectively and how to be more authentic and charismatic in putting across their messages.

Celia Morris, Training & Development Manager, Railways Mott MacDonald Ltd

A profound and compelling message about how our voice links our inner and outer worlds.

Mary Mc Phail, Chief Executive, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

a very practical book, giving sound advice and easy hints, tips and exercises that will help most people build their impact and influence."

Caroline Harding - Director of Learning & Development - Herbert Smith LLP

Full of practical tips, this book demonstrates how you can enhance your ability to speak confidently and authentically in a public setting – whether one-to-one or in front of an audience."

Peter Young, author of *Understanding NLP*

In this book Judy conveys how our voice is a gift to be treasured and celebrated.

Alan Briscoe, Positive Choices Project Manager, Mind Cymru

"Will strike a chord with even the most experienced speaker – everyone can improve."

David Maloney, Business Development Director, Volkswagen Financial Services (UK) Limited

Judy's methods and concepts are highly effective and relevant.

Christine Miller, author and Founder Editor *ReSource Magazine*

A must for the professional speaker from business person to actor.

Judith Delozier, Delozier and Associates International



Judy Apps has spent many years unraveling the secrets of how great leaders inspire others, and now runs open creative programs and coaches leaders in major corporations in voice and communication. www.voiceofinfluence.co.uk

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