Free Report:

How to Influence Others through your Speech, Language and Voice Skills

By Lynda Waltner Stucky
January 2014

Dear Friend,

I am excited to share with you this report about using your speech, language, and voice skills to be more influential and have greater impact. In a comprehensive online report called “25 Things that Influential People Do Better than Anyone Else” by Mark Fidelman (See: http://www.forbes.com/sites/markfidelman/2013/09/18/25-things-influential-people-do-better-than-anyone-else/), Mr. Fidelman talks about how the characteristics of influential people can be learned and developed. Of his comprehensive list of 25 characteristics, ten of them relate to Speech, Language and Voice competencies. Here is the list...can you find the ones that are directly or indirectly related to characteristics of speech, language and voice?

1. They are fantastic public speakers.
2. They have the ability to make the mundane interesting.
3. They have exceptional interpersonal skills.
4. They have more passion about their interests.
5. They find the positive in things.
6. They have superior powers of persuasion.
7. They have the confidence to act.
8. They accelerate prospects through the sales funnel.
9. They maintain an intense focus.
10. They can instantly energize a room.
11. They have more charisma.
12. They have remarkable networks.
13. They are talented multi-takers.
14. They are flexible and adaptable.
15. They have excellent timing.
16. They freely give out compliments.
17. They leverage technology to improve their reach.
18. They are more prepared.
19. They are equally productive when they travel.
20. They understand the power of reciprocation.
21. They are kinder.
22. They are ethical.
23. They don’t have an off switch.
24. They build trust.
25. They spot trends.
I would group Fidelman’s list in the following way (however, some characteristics belong to two categories):

Characteristics related to speech:

1. They are fantastic public speakers.
2. They have the ability to make the mundane interesting. For example, being able to tell a good story.
3. They find the positive in things.

Characteristics related to voice:

1. They have more passion about their interests.
2. They have the confidence to act.

Characteristics related to language:

1. They have exceptional interpersonal skills.
2. They have superior powers of persuasion.
3. They freely give out compliments.
4. They are kinder.
5. They build trust.

Characteristics of body language:

1. They can instantly energize a room.
2. They have more charisma.

In this report, I describe how the use of our speech (articulation/diction), language (the words we choose to use) and voice (tone) all play a large role in being influential. I will talk about some of these characteristics and add a few of my own. As you master the skills of crafting messages in a way that engages others in conversation, or when you are in front of a room, take time to explore the abundant ways that your speech, language and voice skills can be leveraged to have greater impact and influence.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions or comments about this report, please email me at lynda@clearly-speaking.com.

Best wishes,

Lynda

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How to Influence Others through your Speech, Language and Voice Skills

Imagine the devastating effect of receiving feedback from your boss or colleague that you were passed over for presenting a business opportunity. The feedback received was that your style didn’t effectively project confidence, trustworthiness and likeability. Maybe you sounded stressed, overwhelmed, or indecisive. Maybe you were difficult to understand. Your boss loves the work you do but there is something about your communication that is just not right.

Here are five competencies of speech, language and voice that you must have to convey confidence, trustworthiness and likeability. They are followed by two strategies that you can use immediately to develop your skill set.

THREE Speech, Language and Voice Competencies Every Executive Leader Has (and that you MUST possess!).

- **Use understandable speech**

  Are you finding that you have to repeat yourself multiple times during the day? If so, you might have a diction problem (mumbling), loudness problem (too soft) or a strong accent that makes you hard to understand. Although most people are willing to ask you to repeat yourself, it doesn’t take long for the listener to begin to avoid a conversation with the hard-to-understand individual. Asking for repeats too many times is stressful. If you are hard to understand, your message will get lost and your listener will not find you credible or trustworthy (since you can’t relay the message adequately).

  Use an appropriate volume that projects your message. Clearly articulate your words so that your listener doesn’t misunderstand. Use exaggerated mouth movements when you speak and slow your rate of speech so that your listener can understand your message.

- **Be friendly and passionate in your vocal tone**

  To have a friendly voice, you should use a good measure of vocal variety (not flat and lifeless). We generally speak in three keys of pitch (low, medium and high). Use the low key for serious conversations, the middle key for most conversations and the higher key for the topics you are passionate about. There is an appropriate key for every conversation. There must be energy.
and enthusiasm for passion to shine through. Your overall body energy should be visible through wide open eyes, raised eyebrows and a spring in your movement.

- **Speak less and listen more**

  Be short, sweet, and to the point. To gain trust, talk more about the listener and find out about them rather than talking about yourself. A sincere interest in others requires that you ask questions and seek to learn and understand before responding. Once you respond, craft messages that say a lot in just a few words. Think of your message as a post on a social media site. You get very little time/space to make a point. Key into the bottom line of your message immediately and then make your point with an interesting story that relates. Remember to keep your responses to 30-45 seconds.

The **TWO most missed speech, language, voice competencies necessary to Make It BIG** (*these are surprisingly simple to learn…but if you don’t have them, sets you up for failure*),

- **Rate of speech**

  Along with being conversational comes the competency of adjusting your rate of speech so that your listener feels confident that you are in control of the message. A good rate of speech is between 140-160 words per minute. Slower speakers lengthen their vowels in stressed syllables and use frequent, longer pauses throughout their speech. This adds effect to the message and can give a good story a lot of drama. A slower rate of speech signals calmness which helps the listener to feel relaxed and calm. A slower rate allows you to be more vocally expressive, too.

- **Eliminate distractions**

  Any distractions that occur in speech are naturally going to draw your listener away from your message. Common distractors include word fillers (um, uh, you know what I mean, etc.), upward pitch inflections at the end of sentences, excessive body movements, too much nasality or a gravelly voice quality. Controlling these distractions is merely a function of being aware of the distraction and finding a substitute behavior. Ask a colleague to help you identify the distractors that you use.

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TWO Proven Speech Strategies That Get Peers and Leaders to Listen and Respect You!

- **Make your points with relevant stories**

  Why? Stories that make a point do the following for a listener:
  
  ✓ Make the subject come alive
  ✓ Engage the listener
  ✓ Make your message memorable
  ✓ Create empathy through a struggle/problem that the listener will relate to

Every point has a hidden story behind it. A story will help support your assertions in real ways. Suppose that you want to sell an idea that will transform your organizations culture. You know about it because of a first-hand experience or a provocative article/book that you read. In order to convey the message, you must tell a well-crafted story that shows your listener the problem and the solution. Here are the components of a good story:

  - **Beginning**—includes who, where, when
  - **Middle**—includes the context, conflict, proposed solution, complication
  - **End**—includes the actual resolution

Now think of your idea that you want to convey. What are some real-life stories that can be told to make the point?

For example, my client, Susan told me that she was having a problem with her staff getting motivated about a complicated system they were responsible for rolling out to their organization. The process of learning the new system had been long and was laced with many obstacles. Going “live” on time meant that they needed to flush out the problems as soon as possible; the clock was ticking. The rolling out of the new system was only a few weeks away. Susan was having difficulty motivating her staff in an influential way. She felt she was resorting to threats instead of kindness, understanding and firm encouragement.

She and I talked about the consequences of what might happen if things weren’t perfect. We discussed other similar situations that ended up positively despite problems and she told me what kinds of things were important to her staff in order to feel value. After answering these questions, we devised a story to approach the staff with to illustrate the importance of staying motivated and getting the project done well and on time. There was value in it with a promise to give them something that was important—early time off on a designated Friday afternoon.

Susan prepared her script and could tell the story with ease. It was a comparative story of a similar company who installed the same system and encountered the same issues and concerns.
Despite the challenges, it turned out well. She used the story at the next staff meeting and was surprised to see how the staff positively responded. They not only completed the project on time, they avoided big problems at go-live. Susan allowed early time off a few weeks later which pleased everyone!

This was a story that illustrated my point—stories help make points relevant. They lead the listener in a way that a direct request might not do. Whenever possible, use a story to make your point.

- **Learn to connect with your audience**
  Find ways to connect with your audience through the language you use and your tone of voice.

  Use words that show graciousness, encouragement and praise. Put your listener or audience before you so that the words you use won’t focus on you but rather regard them. Freely give out compliments.

  When you start conversations that show that you are interested in them, and warm their heart with a sincere expression of one of their interests, you will significantly increase the odds of likeability. The more you can empathize through facial expressions, word choice and vocal tone so that you connect with the listener, the more effectively you will express warmth and trustworthiness.

When Jerry Seinfeld came to Pittsburgh in 2013, he started his monologue with some very gracious comments about Pittsburgh. The audience immediately warmed-up to him and applauded. He connected with us even before he told a joke. Good speakers/presenters always find a way to connect with the listeners.

Nobody buys your product, ideas or your service until they buy you first. The best way to attract a person towards you is to make your interaction with them all about them. Everything that you say or do should be directed outward as an expression of interest in whomever you are speaking to. It doesn’t matter if your audience is one person or 100 people; the relationship you build with that audience will be significantly influenced by your speech, language and voice skills.

On the next page, you have the opportunity to explore what it sounds like to be friendly, passionate and confident. On the left column are competencies of speech, language and voice skills that can be manipulated to a certain degree to create a characteristic that portrays a descriptive sound. Across the top of the table are various adjectives that describe influential people.
Think of a voice of a person that you admire or someone whom you have heard who sounds friendly, passionate, confident or relaxed. Think about each competency and try to determine where that person’s voice falls on the continuum. In other words, does the friendly person’s speech and voice have a fast or slow rate of speech? Is their pitch high or low? What words/language do they use? Studying characteristics of people you know and admire is the first step towards awareness, so that you know what changes are needed.

Name of person:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies (speech, language and voice)</th>
<th>Friendly</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Relaxed/calm</th>
<th>Passionate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitch (High vs. low)</td>
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<td>Loudness (Loud vs. quiet)</td>
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<td>Resonance (nasal, muffled, rich)</td>
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<td>Quality (breathy, raspy, clear)</td>
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<td>Rate of speech (Fast vs. Slow)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diction/Pronunciation</td>
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<td>Rhythm (choppy vs. smooth)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pausing</td>
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<td>Intonation/Inflection</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<td>Conciseness (verbose vs. minimalist)</td>
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<td>Word Choice</td>
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<td>Body Language</td>
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</tbody>
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"Attract what you expect, reflect what you desire, become what you respect, mirror what you admire." Erica-Tviesha Hurst

Take every opportunity to practice your communication skills so that you can become the influential person that you want to be!

"Communication is a skill that you can learn. It's like riding a bicycle or typing. If you're willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life."

~ Brian Tracy
Thank you for reading this report! I feel honored to be a part of your development!

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