

# THE EXCHANGE

This issue's featured subject is "The Importance of Voice."

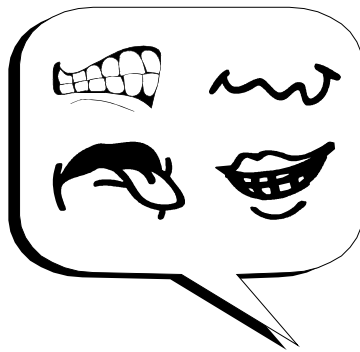
## WHAT IS YOUR VOICE SAYING ABOUT YOU?

When you meet someone for the first time, your voice makes approximately 38% of the impression. This percentage is magnified if first contact is made by telephone. Just what is your voice saying about you?

When your voice is fast, it sends a message that you lack patience or time. This may be internalized by others that you are not interested in the topic being discussed, or even the person discussing it.

Sometimes this hurried pace is revealed in the form of rapid one-word responses, such as, "Yeah...yeah...yeah." This causes some people to talk longer because they are trying to give you enough information to get you involved.

When your voice is high in pitch or frequency for a word or phrase, it sends a signal that you are excited. Raises in pitch are more noticeable in women because they have smaller vocal cords. Some excitement can be appropriate. When the message, situation, or person is negative, your increase in pitch makes you sound angry. Even if you are upset, say it with words, such as, "I am concerned about this" so your voice doesn't have to give you away. Once you state your discomfort, the body relaxes and the voice can return to normal.



When your voice is loud, it heralds to the world that you are increasing your energy level. We get loud when we laugh and also when we are angry. Men have more volume bursts than women, because men have thicker vocal cords and it takes more air to blow them apart for vibration. Volume is nothing more than a lot of hot air. Volume is also very contagious. If one person gets louder, the

other will respond in kind within three exchanges of dialogue.

What do you want your voice to say about you? In negative messages and situations, you likely want to be taken seriously. These are the times to speak slower, lower, and softer. The day after the attack on America, three TLC trainers were working with a group of approximately 15 people for their weekly session. It was difficult to hear people because everyone was talking softer due to the seriousness of their moods.

In negative situations, go low. Sometimes you may not even be aware that another person is experiencing a difficult time. Another way to say this, which rhymes, is "When you don't know, go low." Lower your speed, pitch, and volume. This says you have control and you are to be taken seriously. Remember, your voice is making impressions. Impress upon your voice to go low when it matters most.

## What Our Clients Are Saying

"This seminar has made me re-phrase things before they create a problem. For me, this seminar has given me tools to tackle a potentially career-limiting habit. "

Irene LeCourt, Atlanta GA

Anonymous comments by TLC seminar attendees about TLC trainers:

"They really knew the material and explained the information in a relevant way."

"[They] were very personable and professional and gave us many examples and tools to use."

"They are great at understanding the dynamics of the group and each individual."



## NOVEMBER 2001

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**A careless word may kindle strife; a cruel word may wreck a life; a timely word may level stress; a loving word may heal and bless.**

*Anonymous*

### LOOKING AHEAD:

- ◆ The December issue of **The Exchange** will focus on **Perseverance**.

### LOOKING BACK:

- ◆ For previous editions of **The Exchange**, see our **Back Issues** page.
- ◆ Re-read the **10/2000** edition: **Listening**.



First learn the meaning of what you say, and then speak.

*Epictetus*

#### Quick Tips:

- The “uh’huh” response you make through your mouth is your natural pitch. Compare this pitch to the voice you use when you speak in tense situations.
- Taking a breath before each sentence can increase the power of your voice because you will less likely “run out of gas.”



To learn more about it, click here!

## “YOU’VE GOT PHONE-MAIL!”

By Ben Cairns, M.A.



How many voice mails have you received that were hard to understand? I received one a few months ago that I won’t forget. It is unforgettable because it was unintelligible. It was unfortunate too, because I reserved six hours for an appointment that was cancelled!

How many times are *we* guilty of leaving such messages for other people? Messages that are long, hard to understand, garbled, or quickly spoken are more prone to create misunderstanding and poor impressions than messages that are concise, detailed, and to the point. Here are a few tips for leaving messages that people will understand.

- **Plan ahead.** You cannot always say everything in a message. Besides, thinking as you talk can lead to long rambling messages. Being succinct and organized leaves a good impression.
- **Boil it down.** What do they really need to know? Brief messages are easier to understand and to write down.
- **Include the names.** Leave the name of the person the message is for and clearly pronounce your name. Spell it if it is unfamiliar to the other person. If you are calling someone who will not recognize your name, leave a benefit or reason to return the call.
- **Give your number** and times to reach you.
- **Slow down and enunciate clearly,** especially with numbers. Put a short pause between each set of numbers (4 2 3 pause 6 2 2 pause 8 2 5 5).
- **If it is important, say so.**
- **Let them know the purpose of your call.** That way if they miss you on the return call they can leave an informed message.
- **Leave the date and time of your call.** It is a nice but not necessary courtesy (most machines capture that information anyway).

Excellence shows in your details. This is one place where slowing down can save you time and distinguish you from the crowd. If you are too busy to leave a good message for someone, they may think you are too busy to do a good job or to give them undivided attention. Make deposits, not withdrawals! If you are careful, you will also leave a good impression in addition to getting your message across!

“You haven’t learned life’s lesson very well if you haven’t noticed that you can give the tone of color, or decide the reaction you want of people in advance. It’s unbelievably simple.

If you want them to take an interest in you, take an interest in them first.

If you want to make them nervous, become nervous yourself.

If you want them to shout and raise their voices, raise yours and shout.

If you want them to strike you, strike first.

It’s as simple as that. People will treat you as you treat them. It’s no secret. Look about you. You can prove it with the next person you meet.”

*Winston Churchill*

## ASK THE EXPERTS



### Dear TLC,

I work in a cubicle. My co-workers complain that they can hear my phone conversations all the way across the room. Suggestions?

Loud Lucy

### Dear Lucy,

Sometimes, equipment such as a microphone and headphones can help the individual to speak softer because they can monitor their volume better. Making visual reminders can help also as long as you keep making different ones and move them around so you don’t ignore them. Record your voice with a machine that has a VU reader and watch your volume. Also practice having conversations where you purposefully lower your volume and check with your listener to make sure the volume is adequate. If it is, you now have a new volume pattern as your goal.

## FROG IN YOUR THROAT

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.

Ever had one? Sure. Who hasn't? If you are like most people, at some point you have had a "frog in your throat" just when you needed to speak the most!



The origin of this idiom is not as far fetched as it sounds. It has little to do with a real frog but more of the "buuurrrpppp!" sound that frogs make. In the olden days, much like today, when a person had stomach gas, they would burp to relieve the pain. Before or shortly after the "release," it was difficult to talk.

After the burp, it sounded like a croak of a frog. A person would then say, "So you got the frog out?" Often when a person has to burp, you will notice how they will pound on their chest or hold their stomachs. This actually does help! It is hard to speak when this is happening. Afterwards, you can see and hear the relief in the person's voice.

As it is used today, when clearing your throat, we grunt, moan, and use all types of guttural sounds to ensure that we are clear. To justify these unflattering sounds we make, we innocently say, "I seem to have a frog in my throat."

## MOTOR MOUTHS

When someone is referred to as a "motor mouth," they could be one of three different types. To keep it light hearted, let's use names of common kitchen appliances to describe them.

Crock Pot Talker:

**Symptoms:** Like a crock pot, they start slow and heat up as they go.

**What you can expect:**

- Once they get going, pull up a chair because you'll be there awhile.
- They often use words like "and" or "because" to hold their place in conversations, to give justification to their points, or to provide additional information.
- These talkers speak at a slow rate but give a lot of detail when they talk.

**How to listen to them:** Taking notes in a business setting can help. ParaProbe them to ensure you understand their high level of detail. Insert questions to get them talking about the information you need.

Chopper Talker:

**Symptoms:** Like a dicing or chopping machine, they work rapidly and in spurts.

**What you can expect:**

- They will talk fast, but not for long periods.
- They might speak spontaneously, often stopping mid-sentence to correct themselves.
- Even when calm, they can appear aggravated.

**How to listen to them:** Resist the temptation to say, "Hey, you're talking too fast! What did you say?" Instead, mention a word or phrase you did hear and ask an open question about what was said. For example, "I am sorry, I missed what was said. I heard the project is due next month. What was the rest?" When in private, share with them that it is difficult for you to keep up with them and ask what can they do to help you! They are probably used to being chastised about how quickly they speak. Placing the responsibility on yourself could make them less defensive and more open to suggestions.

Blender Talker:

**Symptoms:** Like a blender, they mix everything together!

**What you can expect:**

- They talk fast and a lot!
- They can make seven words sound like only one, for example: "disizwatweoddadu" (This is what we ought to do.)
- Even when they are controlled, they can sound excited or hyperactive.

**How to listen to them:** Ask StopProbes (closed questions) to confirm understanding, such as: "So, you are saying you are in agreement with us, correct?" Also remember that the average person speaks at 140 words per minute. A *Blender Talker* could easily exceed this. Be tactful and ask them to repeat what they said to make sure you understand, (e.g. "Wow, that is a perspective I have not heard before. I would like to remember that, please say it again" or "Good idea! I would like to jot that down. How did you word that?").

Be a good "communication chef" when it comes to "motor mouths" by applying these tips. You'll find that the efforts you make could produce gourmet results in your people skills!



Use soft words in hard arguments.

*H.G. Bohn*

Remember to...

- Lower your volume when someone increases theirs.
- Insert a pause to increase seriousness in your message.

Life is not so short but that there is always time for courtesy.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*



**Let every nation know,  
whether it wishes us  
well or ill, that we shall  
pay any price, bear any  
burden, meet any  
hardship, support any  
friend, oppose any foe  
to assure the survival  
and success of liberty.**

*John F. Kennedy*

**There is great force in a  
gentle command.**

*George Herbert*

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**THE VOICE OF AMERICA**

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, CEO



I was all set to write an article on accent reduction and my experiences with a variety of well-known people who have sought this change in their voice. Then September 11<sup>th</sup> changed my priorities.

Our citizens are working to combine diversity and the need to find common bonds among us. These goals are sometimes conflicting. We want to be accepting of others, yet we find great comfort when we find others who think, act, and sound like us. Because of our freedom of speech, the media and internet are filled with different voices, different agendas, different needs. Then September 11<sup>th</sup> happened and America found one voice.

That voice cried out in pain and confusion. That same voice comforted friends and strangers alike. Standing in line, anywhere in America, for days following the attack, total strangers shared stories, fears, hopes, and questions that had no answers. Choruses of "God Bless America" and chants of "USA – USA" rang across the airwaves.

Regardless of religious background, that voice turned to God to pray for peace, guidance, and wisdom. That voice became visible as flags of favorite sports teams were replaced with the familiar red, white, and blue. That voice was heard as we each became better listeners, spending time with our families and ones we hold dear.

The last time I remember that voice was in 1991 when we were engaged in the Middle East War. A decade is a long time for that voice to be silent. When will we truly learn the lesson that the united voice of America makes us all stronger? We are all different and may not reach total agreement, yet at times like these, we focus on what we have in common and that focus makes us stronger.

May we continue to contribute to the voice of America. Listen to your neighbor. Appreciate the difference in your co-worker. Speak in a united voice, America...and live your dreams.

**FEATURED SERVICE**

If you have an important presentation to make, begin with a call to TLC. We can help you organize it, dress it up, help with the delivery, or give your voice a tune-up. Most clients benefit from only two sessions. It's private and powerful! Call 888-BECAUSE. Why? Because giving good presentations can get you where you need to be!

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by email [[tlc@talklisten.com](mailto:tlc@talklisten.com)] or phone [1-888-232-2873]. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!

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