



In this Issue

- **News and Updates**
The Value of Personal Responsibility
- **Ask The Voice Coach**
Another one of your questions answered.
- **Featured Article**
Six Steps To Greater Assertiveness
- **Exclusive Discount / Poll Recommends**
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A Message From Poll

Hello from a very sunny Ireland! It seems like we're finally getting a summer that lasts for more than a few days!! We've been very busy over the last 8 weeks at Voice Coach Training, and apart from courses that we have delivered for our clients in Ireland, UK and Spain, I have also spent 3 days in Milan attending a course with Richard Bandler. Richard is one of the world's greatest experts on human behaviour and communication, and with cutbacks, redundancies, and organisations fighting for survival, it was very interesting to hear his take on how we can all make ourselves more valuable to employers and clients.

Of course the irony is that we don't have to wait until our value is questioned before we begin taking steps to improve these vital abilities. The beauty of working on your voice and physical presence is that you do not need to set aside any extra time to put into practise the techniques which bring greater results. More and more people are reassessing their personal and professional skills independently of their organisations, and are realising that they alone are responsible for the effectiveness and successes of their voice and communication expertise. There are multiple opportunities every day with family, friends and colleagues. To them it will just seem that you are particularly clear, focused, and are engaging with them in a relaxed and confident way. Everyone from Teachers to Small Business Owners and Sports Coaches to Sales Executives have employed us recently to improve their vocal and physical communication skills and significantly raise their personal value and potency in their respective worlds.

This month has also seen me back on the set of "The Tudors", and amongst others I was delighted to be coaching once again the very talented Singer and Actress Joss Stone (playing Anne of Cleves). It's a joy to work with her because, having to perform live for thousands of fans many times a year, she gets it. She instinctively understands that whatever your message, you have to rehearse and work through a very focused process to ensure that you perform in a way that excites your audience. We only have ourselves - one voice, one body, one brain, and when these work well together we can excel in many different 'performance' situations - presentations, meetings, sales pitches, speeches as well as singing and acting!

Recession or boom our communication skills have always been, and will always be, the key to our successes.

Please keep all your emails and questions coming in to us. We really appreciate the feedback, and it helps us to ensure that we are providing the information and courses that you want.

Until the next time,

Best wishes,

Poll

Ask The Voice Coach

Q: Poll, I have been a primary school Teacher for just 5 years, and last October I was diagnosed with nodules on my vocal cords. My ENT specialist recommended seeing a Speech Therapist, and I also had a request accepted in my school for me to move to a "resources" role so that I can get a break from Teaching. I still occasionally fill in for Teachers who are out sick, and I do "yard duty" once a week. I have not noticed any great improvement in the quality of my voice, and next month I will be seeing my ENT specialist to determine whether I will have to have the nodules surgically removed. Is there anything you can recommend at this late stage?

Terese, Newsletter subscriber from Co. Mayo, Ireland.

A: Hi Terese, as you will know from our last Newsletter this is not an uncommon scenario for some Teachers, and actually you have done more than most in getting medical help and advice. You have rightly been referred to an ENT specialist by your GP, and he/she has given you the opportunity to make some vocal behavioural changes in the hope that there may be a significant improvement thus avoiding surgery. However filling in for absent Teachers or doing "yard duty" is not resting your voice (in fact it may be exacerbating the problem as your voice now has erratic moments of strain), and of course visiting a Speech & Language Therapist is only useful if you regularly (by that I mean daily) do the exercises prescribed.

As a Voice and Communications Consultant and Coach, I try to get involved with Teachers as early as possible in their careers and give them the skills to protect their voice, strengthen vocal skills and avoid the situation that you have described. If damage has already occurred I will always suggest an opinion from a medical practitioner. In the sports world Alex Ferguson encourages his Manchester United players to be physically, psychologically and emotionally prepared for their next game. If a player gets injured, it is the physiotherapist or doctor who takes over and determines how long it is before Ferguson can have the player back in the squad - normally after an appropriate rest and rehabilitation period. So as a coach I play the guiding, encouraging, motivating and results focused role, as opposed to the medical specialists who look after injury and recovery. Our Vocal Fitness For Life course has proven to be the ideal way for professionals who use their voice to ensure that they stay vocally vibrant and healthy.

If you are asking me for advice I would suggest a period of complete rest (yes, that means silence!) except when you go through your daily rehabilitation exercises. If you injured your leg while playing a match, you wouldn't continue playing, even in small doses, for months afterwards. Pain and discomfort is our body's way of telling us something is wrong. If your voice is important in your life, and as a Teacher it is absolutely vital in your chosen career, you cannot afford to keep putting it at risk. If the nodules on your vocal cords have not significantly diminished, it is most likely that you will have to get them removed. Post operation please ensure that you allow yourself plenty of time for recovery, and begin to apply all the vocal warm-up techniques and skills that you can to protect against the nodules reappearing. Keep in touch and let me know how you get on.

Best wishes, Poll

If you have a question for Poll to answer in future newsletters, please email it to ask@voicecoach.ie We respond to all questions, however we will only choose one to feature in each newsletter.

Featured Article

6 Indicators That You Are Not Being Assertive Enough, and 6 Ways To Do Something About It

Have you ever suspected that you are not being as assertive as you could be? Do you sometimes feel that others take advantage of your friendly nature? If this sounds familiar, the information below will help you get a better perspective and will give you options to improve both socially and professionally.

Read the following statements.

1. *I find it difficult to say no and I often end up taking on responsibilities that I don't want.*
2. *I am too passive and quiet in groups and I am afraid that if I speak out I will appear aggressive.*
3. *It is uncomfortable for me to disagree with people whose views I think are wrong, and I avoid confrontation as much as possible.*
4. *Delegating is not my strength, and I often end up doing my own and other's share of work.*
5. *I do not speak up and share my opinions, especially if they are creative, unique and/or controversial.*
6. *If I want to get promoted I know I have to let others know about the good quality of my work, but I don't want them to think that I am bragging.*

If you answered 'yes' to more than 2 of these statements, or if any of these areas are slowing down your career success then you are not being assertive enough.

Let's consider each one, and look at the options you can take to overcome your concerns:

1. Doormat - Don't Walk All Over Me!

It's always nice to help people, but when you say yes all the time you lose credibility. The inability to say no is a classic sign of a lack of assertiveness. You're firstly telling others that your time is not valuable, and secondly the input that you do contribute is perceived as less valuable.

When you put limits and demonstrate that you know what you do best, you personify confidence. This doesn't mean that you say no to everything and exclude yourself from making positive actions. It just means that you should prioritize your time against your abilities and state why you are not in a position to help. Don't apologize or over-explain why you are saying no, just tell others where your strengths are best suited. State your reasons clearly and move on.

2. As quiet as a (polite) Mouse!

There are many who believe that it is easier to stay quiet rather than to appear rude by disagreeing with someone. The problem with this approach means that you will never get your ideas and views noticed, and never be acknowledged in the decision making process. And worse, someone else will get the credit for stating what you were thinking! This is a sure fire way of restricting your effectiveness and status within any group or organisation.

Practice disagreeing with others in less vital conversations - like where to have lunch or what you thought of a film. When you disagree, don't make it personal. Ensure that you are objecting to the restaurant or the film and not the other person's opinion of the restaurant or film. Do it with objectivity and grace. Simply state your view and the facts supporting it. Once you become comfortable with expressing your opinions, use this increased confidence to take some more risks in challenging situations.

3. Are you talking to me? - I SAID ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?!

In my experience many people who lack assertiveness are afraid of being perceived as aggressive or arrogant. They overcompensate, remain passive and will avoid confrontation. Then often when they do finally get to breaking point they 'snap' and their response goes to the other end of the spectrum and can be completely over the top. Neither extremes are useful. Assertiveness is somewhere in the middle, and is very different from being aggressive.

The impact of communication is very much determined by how people say words and their physicality when they say them. If you choose a calm and friendly tone with open physicality it is unlikely that you will be perceived as aggressive. If you disrespect others' communication by interrupting, demeaning, or criticizing them this can seem aggressive. When you are being assertive, give your opinion and then make your request in a way that benefits the situation and circumstances.

4. It's Ok - My Time Is Not Important!

Delegation is one of the most important aspects to maintaining sanity! It is impossible to do everything really well. It is better to do a few tasks with excellence and pride and allow yourself to become associated with that level of achievement. So whether it is asking your partner to help with the washing up, or whether you are assigning a task to a colleague, it is vital to realise that making reasonable requests is normal. If you end up taking on a lot of other people's work because you are always concerned about irritating or bothering them, this is a definite warning sign.

Assigning jobs to others lets them know that you have confidence in them, and they will appreciate your faith in them. In a work environment it takes considerably less time to write the report than to read one and give feedback. When you gain experience with delegating you will notice that others feel good knowing that you have faith in their abilities to complete the work. This is what good leaders do. They trust, feed back (taking note of number 3 above), and show gratitude for good teamwork.

5. Did You Know That... Oh It Doesn't Matter.

Of course it matters! A lack of assertiveness can stop people from sharing their thoughts and ideas, especially if they are different from the mainstream or from an influential person's opinion. Can you imagine if we accepted that you could only have phones that were attached to wires in the wall, or that light could only come from the sun and candles.

The best way to express your views, feelings and ideas is to be clear on what they are and how they can benefit others. As above, don't jump in at the deep end and tell your boss that she has no idea how to run her company. Start practising asserting your thoughts with friends and family, eventually building up to colleagues, team meetings and your immediate managers in work. The understanding and insights you receive

from people's reactions will give you the confidence to talk to your boss with conviction and honesty. Not everyone will agree with you, but they will be impressed by your composure and passion.

6. Me, Me, Me, Me, Me!

For those lacking assertiveness skills, it can be very difficult to promote themselves and / or take credit for their great work. On the other hand we all want to avoid being those people who no matter what you say to them they have been there, done it and will always have a bigger, better T-shirt than the rest of us! Their 'achievements' are normally full of woolly generalities and are more about loving the sound of their own voice than actually having anything interesting to say. ("I spent five days travelling through Asia and I've seen it all", "I don't think anyone has really experienced pain like I have", "My presentations go on for hours and no one ever gets bored"...)

In a work environment sometimes it is vital to remind people of your capabilities, and this can be done without turning people off. If you are being specific and your story points to a particular outcome and the information you are sharing can help or support others, do not be afraid to share your experiences and achievements. Go out of your way to meet people within your organisation, exchange stories and interests over coffee or lunch. Offer to share the results of your experiences, achievements and accomplishments. This is a win-win situation that helps others and of course benefits you.

Finally remember that there is a fine line between a lot of things - watching & staring, enjoyment & indulgence, and assertiveness & aggression. If you are reading this article there is probably a part of you that would like to become considerably more effective with your interactive communication skills. When you begin to apply the above advice you will find that each section becomes interlinked, and being better at one aspect automatically improves another aspect.

The above advice is taken from our 'Assertiveness, Confidence and Natural Presence' course.

To receive more information about the services and trainings we provide, please feel free to call or email our office and we will be delighted to help you in whatever way we can.

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Poll Moussoulides publishes his Voice Coach newsletter for trainers, teachers, coaches, consultants, sales teams, solo entrepreneurs... and all people who would like get to results whenever they speak. The newsletter is free and contains interviews, articles, exclusive discounts and priority information on courses and events. To join the ever expanding newsletter community, or to find out more, go to <http://www.voicecoach.ie>

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Poll Recommends...

...our upcoming Dublin courses, and also offers all current newsletter subscribers an **exclusive 15% discount** of €50-€140 if you book your place before 23rd July '09 on any course that is taking place in August, September and October.

- **Secrets of Confident & Effective Speakers** - 13 August
- **Vocal Fitness For Life** - 15 & 16 August
- **TV Presenting** - 10, 11, 17, 18 October
- **The Executive Voice** - 5, 6 November & 8 December
- **Assertiveness, Confidence and Natural Presence** - 19, 20 November

IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE ELSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE THESE DISCOUNTS, AND THEY ARE NOT NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS, FEEL FREE TO ASK THEM TO JOIN OUR NEWSLETTER COMMUNITY TODAY AND CLAIM THIS AND FUTURE OFFERS

They can sign up on any page of our Website
www.voicecoach.ie

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ALL COURSES, CLICK [HERE](#)

Demand for Poll's open courses is always high, and many courses are sold out weeks beforehand. To avail of this offer and to receive your discount, please call or email the office before 23rd July.

Here's what others have said about their training time with Poll:

"I found Poll's course inspiring, motivating, challenging and just what I needed to move my career forward. As an exceptional communications expert, Poll offers one of the very best professional development courses I have ever undertaken - both at home and abroad. Not only is the course thorough, well planned and demanding, it is also excellent value for money."

Rosaleen Molloy, Broadcaster, Cultural Arts Specialist

"Poll, for a rather long time afterwards the talk was about your session and how enjoyable and enlightening it was. Our organisation is in the middle of huge change and is trying to keep up with increasing public demands. Your insights were right on message and it was hugely important for all of us. The techniques are already paying dividends, both in dealing more effectively with our public and in building better communications within our dispersed office. I really thank you again for putting in so much work in preparing for the day."

Melanie Pine, Director, Equality Authority Ireland

"Not just Ireland's top voice coach, Poll has a remarkable ability to show you how you can improve quickly, noticeably and permanently. His brilliant ear for sound ensures that he gets only the best from you and that mixed with his terrific insight proves very effective in helping you improve. Poll helped me dramatically improve my voice and presentation delivery and I highly recommend him as a voice and television presenter coach and trainer. "

Owen Fitzpatrick, Psychologist, Presenter of RTE's 'NOT ENOUGH HOURS'

"I will never, never take my voice for granted again! Without Poll I would not have realised how easy it is to use my voice in an assertive, persuasive AND friendly way. Before I always lacked the confidence to express myself, now I know I have the tools to be myself the way I have always wanted people to see and hear me"

Rachel Grant, Human Resources Director

"As a School Teacher of over 25 years, I wish that I had met Poll at the start of my career. For years I have suffered from sore throats and every one or two years I have lost it completely and had to take time off work. Even in the few short weeks since the course I have noticed an unbelievable difference not only in the quality of my voice, but also my breathing is much more comfortable, and shoulder and neck aches are greatly improved"

Niamh Fitzgerald, Primary School Teacher

"Simply, the best communications training I have attended! No waffle, no nonsense theories from books, just good, practical and effective advice. My organisation is now running more smoothly, my teams are happier and our presentation success rate has doubled - and all because I am a better communicator. Thank you Poll."

John Baker, CEO - Pharmaceutical Industry

About Poll

Poll Moussoulides is Ireland's leading Voice Coach and one of Europe's most sought after Performance and Presence Communications Specialists. His company, Voice Coach Training, creates and provides in-house training courses to individuals and organisations throughout Europe with clients from the highest levels of the Broadcast, Music, Political and Corporate sectors.

Many of us do not want to be famous Actors, Singers or TV Presenters, but all of us who have to communicate with clients, customers, colleagues, students, family and friends would love to be able to do this in an effective and natural way - in a way that we can still be ourselves but yet always get the desired response whenever we speak.

Through this free newsletter Poll wants to reach as many people as possible and share his insights from over 20 years of working with some of the world's most famous Performers and dynamic business leaders. He believes that anyone can be a confident and charismatic communicator by applying specific and easy to manage skills and techniques.

For more information about Poll, [click here](#)

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