

Voice guru to teach the art of business blarney

Sep 12 2008 By Greig Cameron

Irish expert brought in to coach Scots students in the art of public speaking

Public speaking continues to be vitally important even in the age of the internet.

With the growth in electronic communications being able to see faces and hear coughs is becoming rarer and rarer for business leaders. So when the chance arises there should be no excuse for not making the most of it and delivering a well prepared briefing. This can apply to anything from a small presentation to colleagues up to a board meeting, industry conference or keynote speech by a CEO.

One group of Scottish business students will soon benefit from the experience of one of Ireland's best known voice coaches. Alongside his corporate clients Poll Moussoulides' CV reads a bit like a Hollywood who's who. Elijah Wood, Mia Farrow, Jon Voight, Richard Dreyfuss, Michael Madsen, Gerard Butler, Whoopi Goldberg and Kim Cattrall are just a selection of those he has helped. Recent projects he has worked on include blockbuster children's film The Spiderwick Chronicles, period drama The Tudors and award nominated psychological thriller Dorothy Mills. Now he is lending his expertise to the new Edinburgh Institute of Leadership and Management Practice at Napier University.

He said: "I am going to be involved with everything to do with physicality and vocality.

"It is about the communications, influence and impact you have as a speaker.

"We will be looking at what the audience sees and hears. To be honest an audience is not really interested in what you intended, planned or hoped to say.

"All those things become irrelevant because they are listening to what you actually said. That is really the core of what we are talking about.

"Executives and leaders these days have such small windows of opportunities.

When they are standing in front of people trying to impress them you have to get it right."

The modules Moussoulides is to present will be experience-based with a great deal of emphasis on preparation and advising on performance techniques.

He said: "We have to learn from the people who are doing it professionally and successfully. It is not a coincidence a good song, film or television programme has a particular process it goes through to engage an audience.

"Sometimes people bring their preparation into their presentation and that is really not fair on the audience or the person delivering the speech.

"The work I will be doing is about that moment in time when you stand and deliver. We will teach techniques any professional performer would go through to be effective but we are not going to be running round with our hands in the wind pretending to be trees.

"It is very much routed in a serious corporate environment. People have to see the results and have confidence in the methods."

There will also be physical tips on posture, stance and breathing correctly.

Moussoulides added: "When you stand in the most comfortable position for your spine it improves the voice. "Even if you scrunch your toes it can affect the pitch of your voice. "We want to give people an ease of movement which allows the voice to have an ease of movement as well."