all the law’s a stage

Using Vocal Techniques From Theatre to Improve Presentation And Public Speaking Skills

2016 Capital Area Legal Writing Conference

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Evaluate A Speaker

- Close your eyes & just listen
- Open them when I tell you to

- Is the speaker …
  
Your reactions?

- Intelligent?
- Competent?
- Credible?
- Likeable?
- Effective?
Why do we care?

Lawyers *speak* more frequently than we *write*, to varied audiences

- Clients & prospective clients
- Supervisors & colleagues
- Opposing counsel
- The media
- The public
- Students
- Judges, juries, agency officials, & other legal decision-makers
Three Attributes of Delivery

VERBAL
The words you say

VOCAL
What you sound like

VISUAL
What they see
In More Detail

**Vocal**
- Volume
- Energy
- Tone
- Pitch
- Clarity
- Pace
- Emphasis
- Expression

**Visual**
- Posture
- Facial Expressions
- Eye Contact
- Movement
- Gestures

*Plus attire & appearance*

**Verbal**
- Jargon
- Filler
- Wordiness
- Transitions
- Colloquial words
- Weak words
- Respect-robbing words

*And more*
how does the voice work?
What makes a Stradivarius sound like a Stradivarius?
The Individual Parts?

Vocal folds, lungs, trachea, larynx, diaphragm, nasal cavity, tongue, lips, hard palate, soft palate …

Or the entire body?
Theatre Voice Exercises

- Stance and relaxation
- Breath
- Pitch
- Tone
- Volume & Energy
- Articulation (Clarity)
- Expression & Emphasis
STANCE

- A effective voice begins with a relaxed body & good posture.
  - *Take a grounded stance*
  - *Relax larger muscles: shoulders, arms, torso, head & neck*
  - *Relax facial muscles*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Part</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feet</td>
<td>Hip width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>Evenly distributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knees</td>
<td>Slightly bent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spine</td>
<td>Straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulders</td>
<td>Down &amp; back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms</td>
<td>Loose at sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>Balanced &amp; up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face &amp; jaw</td>
<td>Relaxed and slack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouth</td>
<td>Relaxed &amp; open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RELAX LARGE MUSCLES

Yawn and stretch
Arm swings
Drop down
Shoulder raises
Head rolls
RELAX FACIAL MUSCLES

Scrunch & release
Kiss & grin
Motorboats
Raspberries
“Tongue gymnastics”
BREATH

- An effective voice is grounded in proper breathing.
  - Imagine filling two spaces – using both your ribs and your diaphragm.
Take a grounded stance.

Breathe in through your nose. Picture filling a vessel with air. Fill your abdomen, then your lower ribs, then up to your chin. Hold for a count of three.

Exhale slowly through your mouth. Keep your ribs expanded. Tighten your abdomen as if you were doing a “crunch.”

Lower abdominal muscles should come in first. Picture rolling a tube of toothpaste.
PITCH

- An effective voice is grounded in a natural pitch that varies with meaning.

- But what is “pitch”?
  - The frequency at which you speak; high or low; similar to a note in music
FINDING YOUR PITCH

Stand in a relaxed posture.

Breathe in deeply and make the sound “ah.”
Gently go up and down the scale.
Don’t force anything; don’t tense the muscles or strain.

Find out how high and how low you can comfortably go. Then, find the middle where you feel most comfortable.
That’s your best voice.
Intone the phrase “doe ray me.”
Intone the numbers “one,” “two,” “three.”
Do it again, and add “four.”

Pause to breath, and then speak your opening without thinking.

“May It please the court. My name is -----,
and I represent the plaintiff, -----.”
Say “mah,” and as you do take your voice smoothly from low to high on one note, then from high to low.

Make a conscious effort to speak rather than sing.

Repeat, varying the pitches on which you begin and end, until you can do this with ease.
Recite the phrase below at a medium tempo.
Then repeat it, first faster, then slower.
Do this repeatedly and vary the pitch patterns.
Be spontaneous and read for vocal effect.

Never, oh never, the fatal endeavor,
the ties that they sever, the fatal endeavor,
the true tried tricycle,
the tricycle tried and true.
TONE

- An effective voice has a resonant tone.

- *But what is “tone”?*
  - The “quality” of the sound; whether it’s “thick” or “thin,” “rich” or “shrill.” It’s the difference you hear when a piano, a flute, and a violin all play the same note.
Yawn on a long AH sound, feeling the arching of the soft palette in your mouth. Do this three times. Repeat using OO and EE. Aim for a full, round, rich sound on each vowel.

Intone these lines:

No no no no no
Nee nee nee nee nee nee
Moo moo moo moo moo
Mah mah mah mah mah
No moo nee mah (3 times)
ARTICULATION (Clarity)

- An effective voice has precise articulation.

- *But what is “articulation”?*
  - *The clear, crisp, accurate production of consonant sounds*
TONGUE TWISTERS

A box of biscuits.
A box of mixed biscuits and a biscuit mixer.

A big black bug bit a big black bear and the big black bear bled blood.

Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager managing an imaginary menagerie.

Any noise annoys an oyster, but an noisy noise annoys an oyster most.
VOLUME & ENERGY

• An effective voice has energy and the appropriate volume.

  • Consider the room, the audience, the circumstances, and your message
“THROWING” THE VOICE

Have two students stand 3 feet apart & give one a small ball. Tell them to toss the ball back & forth as they say “May it please the court.”

With each toss, they should take a step or two back until they’re as far apart as possible. With each step, they’ll need to throw the ball harder AND increase their volume.

Once they’re at full distance, tell one to speak and throw as if they’re 3 feet apart. Then, have them come together again, and tell one to imagine throwing and speaking as if they’re 20 feet apart.
EXPRESSION & EMPHASIS

- An effective voice uses variety for expression and emphasis.
  - Volume; Pitch; Pace; Pauses

  “May it please the court.”
Read the sentence below in a monotone.

Then, read it again repeatedly and experiment with emphasis, using pauses and varying the volume, pitch, and pace.

She took that guy to the party and she left alone.
Choose any short text and read it for emphasis, using pauses and varying the volume, pitch, and pace.

(For today, use one of the short soliloquies from *Hamlet* on the handout.)
Three Attributes of Delivery

VERBAL
The words you say

VOCAL
What you sound like

VISUAL
What they see
Do They Enhance or Detract?

- **Stance** – upright, relaxed, balanced
- **Eye Contact** – with everyone
- **Expression** – relaxed, natural
- **Gestures** – defined, relevant
- **Movement** – Purposeful
- **Appearance** – neat, appropriate
The “TED Talk” Study

- 760 volunteers watched a selected group of TED talks and rated the speakers

  *Half watched with the volume *on*; *half with it off*
Key Points from the Study

- The ratings from the two groups were the same
- *How* you say it matters
- “Jazz hands rock”
- *Scripts kill* charisma
- Smiling makes you look *smarter*
- You have *seven seconds*
PUTTING IT TOGETHER

VERBAL
The words you say

VOCAL
What you sound like

VISUAL
What they see
presence and the second circle
Three Circles of Energy

- **First Circle**
  - Energy falls inward
  - Passivity, resignation, disengagement

- **Third Circle**
  - Generalized outward energy
  - Speaking to everyone
  - Controlling superiority

- *We sometimes need either first or second.*
The Second Circle

- Present, engaged, connected
- An exchange of energy
- The circle of equality
- A sense of absolute presence
patsy rodenburg
why I do theatre

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9jjhGq8pMM
Finding the Second Circle

- **Focus on one person at a time**
  - One *topic* or *sentence* per person
  - Project a *focused* outward energy
  - Focus eye contact, attention, breath, voice, volume
Thank you.

[He bows.]

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