

# **Verbal, Visual, Vocal**

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An Advanced Educational Seminar Presented by PFCI

**Synopsis:** Speakers reach plateaus. They work hard to achieve a certain level (like membership in PFCI) and then – phhht – nothing. No place to go for inspiration or stimulation. Nowhere to go to learn more.

**Until now.** Even the greatest speakers admit that when they want to improve a skill they revisit the basics. Here is a program that can help you...

- Build your vocabulary and terminology
- Become your own voice coach
- Dress for the stage
- Market your skills professionally
- Keep ahead of the paperwork
- Identify areas within your own skill set that need improvement
- Set new goals for yourself as a speaker

## **Table of Contents**

Section I	Getting to Know You
Section II	Present the Subject
Section III	Verbal Skills
Section IV	Using Your Voice
Section V	Visual – Creating a Professional Image
Section VI	Marketing Yourself to Prospective Clients
Section VII	The Paper Chase
Wrap Up	Course Summary Final Group Participation Exercise

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## Section I: Getting to Know You

If you weren't here today, what would you be doing that you're glad you don't have to do?

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## Section II: Present the Subject

A very famous researcher, Professor Albert Mehrabian, Ph.D. of UCLA, conducted a study in which he assessed a numerical value to how people receive communication – or what verbal, vocal and visual influences help communicate a given message. This was a groundbreaking concept in its time as no one had successfully analyzed the communication process in quite the way he did. The study resulted in these often-quoted statistics:

**Verbal:** What you say (the content) is 7% of the message

**Vocal:** How you say it (your voice) is 38% of the message

**Visual:** What the listener sees (your body, stance and enthusiasm) is 55% of the message

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## Section III: Verbal Skills

### **Part One: Vocabulary**

The messages you deliver whenever you speak (the actual words and content) are the most important details you communicate to an audience. They make you credible and believable.

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### **Words are the start. How do you build your vocabulary?**

- AIFD Book of Floral Terminology: floral terms with easy to repeat definitions  
*Visit [www.aifd.org](http://www.aifd.org) or call (410) 752-3318*
- Webster's Word of the Day: general vocabulary  
*Visit [www.merriam-webster.com/service/subinst.htm](http://www.merriam-webster.com/service/subinst.htm)*
- Book Reference: "The Words You Should Know – 1200 Essential Words Every Educated Person Should be able to Use and Define" by David Olsen  
*ISBN # 1-55850-018-9*

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## Example of Webster's Word of the Day

The Word of the Day is:

**diligent** \DIH-luh-junt\ (adjective)  
characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort: painstaking

Example sentence:

Because Mary is such a careful and diligent worker, her supervisor often holds her up as an example to the other employees.

Did you know?

You're more likely to be diligent about something if you love doing it. The etymology of "diligent" reflects the fact that affection can lead to energetic effort. The word, which entered English in the 14th century by way of Middle French, descends from the Latin verb "diligere," meaning "to value or esteem highly" or "to love." Of course, you can be diligent even if you don't care for the task at hand, but it certainly does help!

### Participation Exercise

Select a word from the hat. Read and internalize the definition, and then write a sentence using the word. Each person will stand and read his or her word, definition and sentence so the entire class will learn a group of new words.

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## Participation Exercise

Think of an industry myth – an old wife’s tale that has been handed down in the flower business. Follow the six steps we just covered to prepare a brief 1-1.5 minute presentation of the subject.

*Sample Ideas:*

*Vodka makes flowers last longer.*

*Put pennies in the water to make tulips last longer.*

*Pound a woody stem to smithereens so it takes up more water.*

*Add aspirin to the water to make flowers last longer.*

Try to analyze or reason the following:

- Where did this myth come from?
- What factors contribute to the myth’s perpetuation?
- What can be done to dispel the myth?
- Is it really a myth or is there a measure of truth to it?

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### **Content Summary:**

- Think it through
- Check the facts
- Build your case
- Edit your content
- Check your gut

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## Section IV: Using Your Voice

### The six aspects of voice

1. **Articulation** – the way you shape your words by using your tongue, teeth, lips and soft palette.
  - A speaker can make his or her voice sound sloppy by not pronouncing certain sounds, especially “th,” “ing” and “s.”
  - Articulation will improve when the rate of speech slows down and the speaker concentrates on pronouncing the words.
  - Proper articulation basically means dotting your i’s and crossing your t’s.

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2. **Pitch** – the natural highs and lows in your voice.
  - Relaxation is important to maintaining your pitch at a normal level.
  - Singing low notes will help lower your pitch permanently.
  - Nervousness causes the pitch of your voice to become higher.

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3. **Inflection** – Webster's dictionary defines inflection as a change in the tone of voice.
- You can ask for approval while speaking with a rise at the end of your sentences.
  - Making the end of your sentence goes down is a sign of strength and assertion.
  - Middle inflection is a monotone voice – this is boring to the audience.

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4. **Resonance** – the way the sound bounces around in your throat, mouth and nasal cavities.
- An artificial means of adding resonance to a voice is to use a good sound system and increase the bass control.
  - Two extreme resonance sounds are:
    - Nasalizing*: when too much air is forced through the nose while pronouncing words especially vowels. The only sounds that should be drawn through the nose are “m,” “n” and “ng.”
    - Denasality*: when not enough air is drawn through the nose. This creates a very flat, stuffy sound.

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5. **Projection** – the natural volume of your voice is based on several factors:
- Background noise (ambient noise) in the room.
  - Distance between you and your audience.
  - Quality of your sound system and the acoustics of the room.
  - Your subject matter at hand.
  - To increase your projection, speak from the diaphragm, not the chest (just as you would when singing). Many speakers get nervous and start breathing very shallow from the chest.
  - Always test the microphone system. Make sure that it enhances your voice and that you can be heard properly.

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6. **Rate of speech** – the speed at which you deliver your presentation. The duration of each sound and the number of pauses are combined create your rate of speech.
- Conversation and platform speech are not the same.
  - Animated speakers speak 200-250 words per minute.
  - Your goal for a group presentation should be 120-150 words per minute.

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## Section V: Visual – Creating a Professional Image

An audience is said to make an instant judgment about a speaker in 6 seconds or less. This impression is created by what a participant sees, including:

- How you are dressed (attire)
- How you conduct yourself, how you treat people (persona)

### **Attire**

- Creative people dress more creatively.
- Always err on the side of conservative dress.
- Make sure your attire is “situation appropriate.” (Be careful of costumes!)
- Pay careful attention to accessories (this is one area where most floral-designers-turned-speakers seem to err).

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### **Persona**

**Facial Expressions:** Your face tells an audience a lot – it communicates how you are feeling, your comfort level and your ease. Watching your audience members’ facial expressions and body language can tell you everything you need to know.

- Eye expressions (raised eye brows, deep concentration) express interest, surprise or shock.
- A nod of the head can say “I understand and agree.”
- A smile is sign of confidence and security.

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**Eye Contact:** Through eye contact you will develop a personal relationship with your audience. It's very important to be sincere.

- Make sure you look at each individual for 4-5 seconds.
- Gain strength and encouragement for your message from enthusiastic audience members.
- Your audience will tell you when they do not understand, when they need to take a break or when it's time to stop.

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**Body:** Are you in control of your person?

- Posture is important. Be careful not to slouch! Use a trio of mirrors to check your posture.
- Movement during your presentation adds energy to your presentation.
- Purposeful movement relaxes you, teaches you to pause and breathe, and allows you to feel natural.
- Be cautious of movement that has no purpose – like swaying or rocking. These movements can make you appear nervous or unsure.

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## **Section VI: Marketing Yourself to Prospective Clients**

Create a professional packet about yourself to present to prospective show contacts. Include the following:

- A letter of introduction
- A one page biography/synopsis of your career
- An outline of your preferred types of shows or special abilities
- A photo or digital print of a photo (head and shoulders shot)
- Industry references

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### **Other Marketing Ideas:**

- Produce a short videotape of your presentation (not longer than 5 minutes) to send to prospects.
- Invest in having a Rolodex card made with your contact information.
- Be sure to have your e-mail address printed on everything you send out.
- Create your own Web site and put your brochure online.
- Brand your work. Choose a color harmony for your stationary and/or Web presence. Use something distinctive and classy, be careful not to go over the top. Create a logo for your speaking business.
- Beware of blanketing the industry with propaganda about yourself. Instead, make a personal phone call to show contacts, and then ask permission to send them an information packet for their files.
- Keep in touch with contacts periodically through out the year to keep yourself top of mind.

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### **Group Participation Exercise**

Get together in small groups and create lists of marketing ideas, professional image ideas and branding ideas. Designate one person to present your ideas to the group.

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### **Section VII: The Paper Chase**

#### **Stay Organized**

- Keep an organized notebook that lists all of your upcoming and past floral events. Create tabs in the notebook for each event.
- Keep your calendar up to date at all times!
- Create an Event Information Sheet – a form to complete when you are contracted or confirmed for a job. Be sure to include all contact names and information, as well as your speaking fee.
- If the client does not supply a written contract, you should create one and submit it to the client.

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## Creating research information files

- Background information for all events
- Clippings from magazines and newspapers
- Outlines/illustrations of your events
- Copies of every program handout you create

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## Paperwork checklist (from the initial contact to the follow-up thank you notes)

- Introductory letter
- Bio and floral history
- Event information sheet
- Program outline and research information
- Introduction bio for the MC of the event
- Copies of airline tickets, hotel confirmation numbers, etc.
- Invoice for your client
- Thank you notes to all the individuals that helped you during your job

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