

Speaking The Language of Sound Leadership

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Recently the Head of a renown West London boys' school, when praised on his speaking ability, divulged the advice given to him by an elderly mentor: "*Those who speak, lead; those who cannot, follow*". The young man put this to good use, becoming a charismatic leader of young people and founding The Lucca Leadership Trust.

But how can we all lead when so much human activity requires teamwork and co-operation? Whether you are the CEO, a Social Innovator, team leader or just dependent on team work, the sounds within your words will affect both comprehension of meaning and the received impression.

We communicate constantly, with looks, movements, yawns, sighs and stillness. Next time someone speaks, listen attentively. Listen so that you hear both what is and is not said. How long can you remain listening? Note the effect of your attention. Does the speaker continue, speed up or slow down, assume your agreement or disagreement, falter and dry up?

The Radio 4 series, *The Sound of Life*, seeks to answer the question whether, in the primordial jungle, hearing evolved first to listen for predators, or to locate a mate?

Today, do you listen more to keep yourself separate and safe, or to join in to feel safe? Do you listen for information, or the quality of the message? When you give instructions do you just state the goal or the means?

In 2003, I completed research of *The Male Voice of the Commercial Property Industry*. It became evident that the masculine voice, which intended to convey confidence and direction, was often belied by undercurrents detracting from the success of the message. Uncertainty stemming from each speaker's own inner state became detectable, and noted by those listening.

In our time of communication through email and text message, dialogue and accord suffer. We are not so ready or able to concur with important and complex issues when we only 'see' a communication.

Vision separates, sound unifies.

Fundamental to becoming a good speaker is the ability to pause and listen. It's important to make pause your friend. Then, when you have something to say, your voice and words will ring true.

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