

The Way You Talk Can Hurt You: 3 Tips to Better Communication

By Rosa Chillis

Joseph worked hard. As a customer service telephone representative, he showed respect and courtesy to everyone who called the company. But he wanted to get ahead. He wanted an outside sales job. He applied for open positions over and over again; his manager turned him down each time. Finally, Joseph went to his boss and demanded to know why.

“Joseph,” he said, “Your enunciation is so lousy, I wouldn’t dare send you out to meet my customers face to face.” Joseph felt crushed. He resigned the next day.

Are you getting the career results you want in the workplace? If not, take a few minutes to assess your vocal habits. Why? Because your voice is your image; people will always judge you based on how you talk. They will listen to the way you speak – how you say what you say – and evaluate your credibility, professionalism and competence.

For example, an office worker who constantly drops his or her word endings will be viewed as lacking intelligence, or at best, a sloppy speaker – no job promotion. A female manager who has a high-pitched, squeaky voice will be viewed as uncertain or unsure of herself – no control over her team. Or a college instructor who lectures in a monotone voice will be viewed as dull and boring; and will put his students to sleep – no learning occurs.

But there is hope . . .

Tip #1: Tape-record your voice. This is important because when you’re speaking your voice sounds different to you than to others. Ask yourself: is my voice crisp and clear? Does my voice have a pleasing and pleasant pitch level? If you answered no to these two questions . . .

Tip #2: Begin a self-improvement program at once! To help you speak crisply and distinctly, say your words to the end. For instance, say ‘subject’ not ‘subjeck’; ‘bend’ not ‘ben’; ‘reading’ not ‘readin’ and so forth. To control your pitch level, breathe from the diaphragm; learn to relax. When you’re tense, you’re self-conscious, and the tension reveals itself in a strained, high-pitched voice. Speak slowly. This will lower the pitch of your voice.

Watch your posture! If you slouch, sag and hunch over, you can’t breathe efficiently and this will show in your voice. In fact, these postures will actually restrict the sounds you produce in your voice box.

Finally, some believe the effective speaking voice is like a musical instrument. Thus, to practice vocal variety (and not sound monotonous and boring), move your pitch around by singing up and down the musical scale: do (doe), re (ray), me (mee), fa (fah), sol (soul), la (lah) ti (tee), do (doe).

Tip #3: Practice, practice, practice. Habits are difficult things to change, and bad voice habits that have

persisted for twenty or more years can not be replaced with better ones in a few short weeks. However, if you are willing to work to learn a new way of speaking you can overcome the obstacles.

Conclusion: This article suggested 3 tips to improve your communication skills. Through clear, distinct speech you can change perceptions, improve your credibility, and project a more competent and professional image. Your goal should be to develop a voice that is intelligible, flexible, vital and expressive. Why not get started today!

“Speech is a mirror of the soul: as a man speaks, so is he.” – Publilius Syrus

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About the author:

Rosa Chillis is president of Adasane & Associates, Inc., and a communication instructor specializing in oral communication, interpersonal communication and voice & articulation skills. She is author of the e-book titled *Your Voice Is Your Image: Four Ways to Improve Your Speaking Voice*. Find out more at <http://www.communicationmarketplace.com>