



focalvocal

Welcome, Bienvenue and Herzlich Willkommen to

VocalPoint

FocalVocal's Free Monthly Newsletter

VocalPoint: Issue 6: February 2007

Welcome to the sixth issue of VocalPoint!

The FocalVocal team and I are delighted that you are interested in receiving up to date news about FocalVocal and reading articles written by us about current issues within training today. If there are specific questions you have regarding your training needs or areas that you think are worthy of investigation, we would be happy to hear from you and see if we can help out by doing some research and writing an article.

In this month's issue of VocalPoint, apart from giving you details regarding what's on, what's new and what's coming up, Gareth Rubin one of FocalVocal's media trainers will be giving some helpful hints on how to approach an interview with the media.

However, in the meantime:

What's on?

In-house taster sessions

FocalVocal is currently offering free of charge in-house taster sessions, a perfect opportunity for you to test drive FocalVocal's method of training and our skills. If interested please e-mail monica@focalvocal.co.uk

A recent two-hour taster session conducted at PKF (UK) LLP proved hugely successful and thought provoking dialogues regarding combating nerves by 'thinking in pictures' when presenting ensued.

'PKF invited FocalVocal to deliver a taster session on Beginners Public Speaking. The attendees found it to be informative, developmental and fun. The presenter and actors struck the right tone from the very start and allowed the participants to contribute which helped maintain their focus. It was a thoroughly worthwhile session.'

John Watkins Director of Training and Development PKF (UK) LLP
Accountants & business advisers

FocalVocal Taster Sessions 2007

1. Beginners Public Speaking with Monica Lowenberg
2. Assertiveness with Helen McNeill
3. Managing Change with Chris Robinson

4. Giving and Receiving Feedback with Chris Robinson
5. Work/Life Balance Helen McNeill
6. Media Training with Gareth Rubin and Monica Lowenberg as from April 2007
FocalVocal taster sessions are two hours and fifteen minutes in length, conducted at your premises by one trainer and two actors, one session can train up to 18 persons.

What's New?

Corporate Entertainment

'Raise the Spirit' a light-hearted look at the world of wine, led by wine expert (or so he thinks) Angus Tarte. The inflated and flawed ego of Mr Tarte visits wine growers, sommeliers and marketers from the new and old world regions.

If you would like an opportunity to see FocalVocal's Karen Bartholomew in this production DVD's of the show are now available.

If interested please email monica@focalvocal.co.uk

What's coming up?

- **New workshops for small groups**
- **Forum theatre**
- **Role-Players for assessment days and pilot days**
- **New website**
- **New brochure**
- **March VocalPoint with Kirk Halinson 'Team Coaching -What constitutes a winning team?'**

Kirk, FocalVocal's business coach is a qualified Life Coach who has gained several coaching qualifications with both the European Coaching Foundation (ECF) and Newcastle College, one of the UK's leading Life Coaching and Corporate Coaching training providers. Kirk is a fellow member of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants and during the past 25+ years has held senior roles within Finance, Administration and most recently Human Resources.

In the meantime here is Gareth with some useful tips on:

How to approach an interview

Seven things to bear in mind when being interviewed by the media

In general

1. **Editors need information to turn into stories.** The first thing to remember is that editors need information. They need it provided in a way that will make their job easier, not harder. So they want the interview to go well – work with the journalist, not against him!

Before the interview

2. **Work out what the reporter wants from this interview.** Look through other mentions of your company or similar companies in the media. Look at what they have found interesting and build on that. For instance, if they have all been interested in your foreign operations and not your domestic (and you don't mind which they talk/write about), concentrate on the foreign because you will get more overall coverage.

3. **Read around the subject:** Make sure you are an expert in the field, not just about your product. But always gently bring the conversation back to your own business. For print interviews, it is useful to take along a folder of supplementary information which includes quotes, names and phone numbers of customers happy to be quoted etc. If you are selling a good, rather than a service, a CD of high-quality images of the product will be welcome – try to get photos of the product being used, not just pictured sitting on a table. You can also take along a sample of your product to let the journalist try it out for herself.

4. **Choose your wardrobe carefully** to promote the image of the company (which is not necessarily your own image – if you are working for a hip young clothes company aimed at teens, don't wear a three-piece suit and bow tie).

During the interview

5. **Think about your body language** – are you open and inviting or closed off?

6. **Remember that you are selling something**, this goes for whether you are trying to persuade the consumer to buy your new face cream or travel on your planes. The problem is, that if it looks or reads too much like an advert, the editor will bin it. You must dress up an advert to look like news. You should include as many of the 15 points below as possible to sell your product – and adapt them to your particular industry.

1) **Your product credentials and the track record.** This includes how much and how often it has been used.

2) **Client testimonials:** Suggest people to quote. For instance: 'I understand Jamie Oliver has one of our ovens and said in his latest book that it produces the best chops he has ever tasted.'

3) **Research:** Pick out the high points, for instance. 'Our research shows that 54 per cent of first-time buyers would be better off with this type of mortgage.'

4) **Don't waffle.** It's hard to say when the waffling begins, but always remember you are answering a specific question and if the point you are making does not answer that question, stop. On the other hand, don't give monosyllabic answers. If the reporter asks, 'Is the Gendit pension fund in trouble?' the answer is not, 'Yes'. It is, 'Yes. Gendit is in big trouble because if they cannot secure a cash injection of £1.2bn in the next few months 5,000 of its members will lose a substantial amount of their entitlement. And that will hit people who have worked hard all their lives for a comfortable retirement.'

5) **Be clear. Use analogies and avoid jargon!** Put yourself in the reporter's shoes: Remember, he may not know much about your industry, so make sure everything is clear. It may help to use analogies, e.g. 'Our new polymer is like an elastic band, it stretches with increased tension and snaps back into place...' When making complicated points, simply ask the journalist: 'Was that clear? Was there anything you need explained further?' to give him a chance to ask for explanation of anything he did not understand. It won't do either of you any good if he chooses to remain silent on something he did not comprehend. For this reason, jargon is to be avoided whenever possible. And that goes double for Businesspeak – the phrase 'going forward' is universally mocked in the media for its utter meaninglessness.

6) **Illustrate your point.** Say: 'This budget is good for those on medium incomes. A teacher on £29,000 will be £400 a year better off, enough for a holiday.'

7) **Speak in sound bites:** 'London is the greatest venue for the 2012 Olympics and we're in it to win it.'

- 8) **Speak in bullet points and then explain them.** Listing points can often clarify matters and make them punchy. 'There are three reasons that the chemicals sector is doing well: Efficiency, new technology and increasing demand. Efficiency relates to new processes which have made production faster. New technology means...'
- 9) **Repeat yourself. Go into the interview with three primary points** you want to make, each one being stated in one or two sentences which you have crafted and rehearsed for impact and clarity. Make sure you mention each of these. Have the same three points in a different wording, and state them again later. This will make the journalist realise they are the important points and he should give them appropriate emphasis.
- 10) **Have three secondary points.** These are points you would like to get in, but are not as necessary as the primaries. There is no need to prepare and rehearse them as statements.
- 11) **If you don't want a remark attributed to you** – for instance if it is 'knocking' one of your rivals but you don't want to start a public slanging match – tell the reporter it can be used as background, but not attributed to you.
- 12) **Don't tell the reporter her job.** Don't say: 'I don't think your readers will want to know that.' Or refuse to give the price of something when she asks, saying: 'If they are interested they can call us and find out the price.' Does Argos advertise Sony's new DVD system without a price on the ad? Of course not, because it would mean fewer sales as people can't be bothered to enquire about it without first knowing if they can afford it. Know your product, know how much it costs, and tell people.
- 13) **Say sorry and offer to put things right.** If your company has made a mistake and mistreated a customer, say 'sorry' and offer to put it right. You will find your sales figures will be all the better for it.
- 14) **Mention upcoming event tie-ins.** If your soft drink is being taken on the next Space Shuttle mission, tell the reporter.
- 15) **Contact details** .At the end of the interview, ask if they will be able to include your phone number or website at the end of the article. Usually they will say yes – they are aware that you have given up your time and feel it is fair to give something in return. But if you do not raise the point, they may not bother.

For broadcast interviews If you can do it subtly, work your company name into the recording – it the broadcast may only last seconds and the viewer/listener could easily forget whom you represent. For instance 'Euroflight has outperformed the sector by 20% over the last 18 months.'

After the interview

7. The next day call or email the reporter to thank him for his time and ask if there is any other material he needs or anything else he needs to know. Offer to read through the article before publication to make sure all the 'technical' points are accurate. Stress that he is welcome to write anything he likes and that you will not be demanding more positive coverage. Many journalists will appreciate the offer and you can ensure there is nothing inaccurate.

Gareth currently works as a journalist and actor. He has reported live from the scene of the London bombings, interviewed Tony Blair and been entirely unsuccessfully sued by Mohamed al Fayed. He now works in news for the Observer and writes about architecture for the Guardian and large-scale mergers and acquisitions for Financier Worldwide. He also trains journalists on an NCTJ course.

- *know that a dynamic, interactive learning environment is the most successful in helping you to retain newly acquired skills and be confident to apply them*
- *are bored with courses where you get to sit, but don't actually get to do*
- *have found it to be a bonus to have trainers and actors who are native English speakers but are also bi-lingual in German and French*
- *like the challenge of working with professional actors to test out new skills in a fun, non-judgemental environment*

If you think the same, then get in touch with FocalVocal today!

Please feel free to forward VocalPoint to anybody you feel would find it of interest.

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