

Vocal Performance

(adapted from SellOnSite - The Complete Video SalesLetter Course)

The X Factor

Given equal measures of creativity, intellect and drive, what gives one person the power to sell and inspire while another struggles to stay afloat? The answer is the elusive X Factor. TV executives call it your “Q Rating”. Others call it charisma. Whatever it is, we need to figure out a way to get it into your video, because it accounts for about 20% of your success.

Your video sales letters will need a heaping helping of your personality to be really effective. Whether you choose to be on camera or off, your voice will be the primary way you communicate your passion. If you can't turn on your voice, your script could just lay there and end up being wasted. We do not want this to happen, so we're going to focus in this section primarily on your voice.

Why just the voice? Because it's also key to your whole performance. There are a few things to do to maximize the passion in your voice by way of the body, but the really nitty-gritty parts of this training are going to be about what we hear when we see what we see.

Vocal Components

Fortunately there are just a few basic things you need to master when it comes to the audio portion of your video sales letter.

Articulation

If you don't pronounce words correctly, or at least in the accepted way your national dialect pronounces them, you'll be in grave danger

of tuning out your audience. If you aspire to teach, you need to be an example of what you teach. Slurring your words and mispronouncing is a non-starter and ought to be the baseline of acceptability before any of the following techniques are used.

Having said that, even if you don't mispronounce or slur your speech, it's easy to get yourself tripped up when reading out loud. If you practice the following tongue-twister before you record your presentation, you'll be in much better shape for everything that comes after it.

Say the following three times as fast as you can, over-articulating with your lips:

“The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue.”

“To sit in solemn silence on a dull dark dock, in a pestilential prison with a life-long lock, awaiting the sensation of a short sharp shock, from a cheap and chippy chopper on a big black block.” (who knew Gilbert and Sullivan were so morbid?)

Peter Piper, the pickled-pepper picker, picked a peck of pickled peppers. A peck of pickled peppers, did Peter Piper, the pickled pepper picker pick. If Peter Piper, the pickled pepper picker, picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers, Peter Piper, the pickled pepper picker, picked?

Volume

You need to be loud enough for the microphone to hear you without a lot of static in the background. The problem with speaking too low is that the mic has to work very hard to pick up the sound. When it

does, it also is forced to pick up all the other sounds in the area. This happens because, in order to get you at a level that's high enough to be heard, it automatically picks up highway noise, birds outside, etc. So to prevent that, simply speak at a loud enough volume that the microphone can be turned down and focus just on you.

The rule is this: that the quieter you are, the closer the microphone needs to be. And now you know why!

Contrast

Nothing turns off an audience quicker than a boring monotone voice. Monotone can be at a low level of volume or a high level. The problem is not as much volume as it is sameness. In order to make your ideas distinct, they must seem different from one another. And that's where contrast comes in.

Contrast is used in three basic modalities:

1. volume
2. rate
3. tone

For example, to emphasize a benefit, you might want to raise your **volume** at a certain point in the script. Like this: "and you'll get this personal guidance for not one, but THREE MONTHS."

You could emphasize a problem by slowing down your speech at a certain point (changing the **rate**). For instance:

"The problem_is_you're_the_one_who_has_to do...all...that...yourself.

Finally, you could use a **pitch** change to indicate how you feel about something (and therefore how your audience should feel about something)

“ It’s [↗]crazy to think you can get [↘]skinny
by never exercising!”

Notice the little arrows that point up or down in the text. They indicate whether or not you should raise the pitch of your voice rather than the volume. You can mark your script like this so that when you read it out loud, you won’t forget to include any of the changes in tone, volume or speed.

Emotion

I hope it goes without saying that so much of this can be accomplished intuitively if you simply use emotion in your video sales letter. Put everything you believe into your vocal performance and even if you think you have a face made for radio, well, it will be simple to test that theory now. So before I lay out the nitty-gritty of script markings, let’s look at a few tips that can get you there naturally.

Warm up

Always do those tongue twisters before recording. You’ll make fewer mistakes along the way.

Don’t rush it!

Your audience will be busy enough watching the video. Don’t make them work too hard trying to keep up with your rapid pacing. This happens when you get nervous, so make sure you’re in a relaxed buy ready state, like a downhill skier in the gatehouse.

Stand up and talk with your hands

When you stand, you have more energy. Likewise when you talk with your hands. Give yourself permission to go a little crazy.

Smile





When you smile the world smiles with you. Specifically, it changes the tone of your voice and makes it more attractive.

Script markings





The following markings are the all the different ways you can add variation, and thus life, to your script.

Note: Volume changes on the word that follows the arrow.

Volume Change:

Up:  My  business is successful because I put customers first.
Down:  My business is  successful because I put customers first.

Pitch Change:

Up:  My business is successful because I put  customers first.
Down:  My business is  successful because I put customers first.

Emphasis: _____

My business is successful because I put customers first.

Rate Change: Nope. It's not about your electric bill going up. It's about the pace of your speech getting faster or slower. Slowing down to make a point is a good thing. Speeding up through pro forma text is also a good thing. But you need to remind yourself to do it. Here's how:

Speed Up: >>

Slow Down: V

My business is successful. Because I put customers first.
>>>>>> V V V

Pause: |

My business is successful because I put | customers first.

Then there's the **False Gate**. The False Gate is a special kind of pause. It's a pause with an afterthought that gets special emphasis. So you stop speaking just like it's the end of the sentence. Then change the emphasis completely as if you JUST thought of this other thing that was even more important. In the sentence below it would result in the word "because" being hammered and the rest of the sentence that comes after it almost being thrown away.

False Gate: ⚡

My business is successful. ⚡ Because I put customers first.

These are the big ones. These are the ones that will keep your audience hanging on your every word. Just look back at all those sentences. And the next time you think that a thought can only be expressed in one way, think again!

You can create worlds of meaning by the inflection in your voice. If you don't believe that, start with your own script. Mark it up the way you think it should go, then just for laughs, mark it up in a completely different way, then say it out loud. I think you'll be pretty impressed at the variation and excitement you're capable of creating.