



07930 157543  
info@eaglei.uk.com  
www.eaglei.uk.com

## The Human Element

### Making an Emotional Connection in Communication

It is said by some that delivering an effective presentation or speaking in public can be defined by the 5 P's:

- Purpose
- Preparation
- Passion
- Presence
- Personality

While recognising that the aim and doing your homework are both important, it is the latter three areas that I want to concentrate on when examining *The Human Element*.

Have you ever considered when watching a TV drama, film or play - when it has ended - what it was you remember most about what you have seen? The key aspects you are most likely to remember - that you can relate to - are the story/situation and the characters. The fact is that it is one or both (and it is usually the characters) that create an emotional response within you; the characters make you feel something eg happy, sad etc. Taking this idea a stage further, the things that we remember most clearly from our lives to date, are those moments that have touched us emotionally in some way ie family relationships, special birthdays etc.

Now apply these same feelings and emotions to the world of business. While few people will openly admit that emotions have anything to do with the daily rigors of business, they most certainly do. For example, how good do you feel when receiving praise from your manager or a customer? Equally, who can easily forget the first time these same people reprimand or make a complaint about you?

The trouble is that all too often, we make a clear distinction between the personality we show at work and at home. The key question is why? After all, it is you – the same person! Of course, you use and display different skills and attributes at work and home, but it is still you. Why is it that you only allow yourself to display say, 50% at work of who you really are? What about the other half? For example, how many times have you sat in a work meeting where you feel yourself disagreeing with something that is said, but choose not to say anything? For whatever reason you bite your tongue, the meeting finishes and your chance has gone. Why did you consciously choose not to speak out? Why did you limit yourself in this way? Would you have said nothing if a similar scenario arose at home? The answer to these questions, more often than not, is fear (or extreme nerves): fear of saying the wrong thing, something stupid or just not being listened to or taken seriously.

If we relate this to any form of communication, it is of vital importance to give yourself permission to display the whole of you. In essence, what your audience are most likely to remember is you as opposed to for example, the product or service you are presenting. It is you they have come to see or meet with and it is your personality, passion and enthusiasm that will ultimately strike a chord and trigger an emotional response within them.

In essence, it is not so much *what* you say as *how* you say it. Your personal presence is the experience that people have of you and the memory they will take away.



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So how do you overcome your fears and achieve this 'emotional connection' with your audience? Here are my top 12 practical steps to successfully displaying *your* Human Element:

1. Find a **POSITIVE REASON** every time for doing anything. To do it better than last time will do for starters.
2. **FOCUS** - away from any nerves – onto practical things. This can be done before you start and in the early stages when communicating. Two ways to achieve this: 'tunnel' your focus on the first few moments of what it is you are saying and nothing else. Secondly, 'visualise' how well it is going to go with a positive image ie picture receiving rapturous applause at the end!
3. **WHAT YOU THINK – YOU FEEL, WHAT YOU FEEL – YOU PROJECT.** If you think negative thoughts or feelings, you will project these emotions and your audience will pick up on them. Think positively and the reverse will happen.
4. **BREATHE** - in deeply (from your diaphragm) through your nose and out through the mouth. Repeat three to five times. This will help to control your nerves. A surge of adrenalin is good, uncontrolled nerves are not.
5. **POSTURE** - settle on a position that you feel comfortable holding. When presenting, feel free to walk about and use your hands to emphasise. But remember stillness is always read as confidence.
6. **BEING HEARD** - vocal energy is infectious. Audiences 'soak' up sound, so project, modulate, emphasise what you say. Try 'throwing' your voice to the back wall.
7. **EYE CONTACT** – it is not possible to make contact with everyone; scan the room and focus your attention on up to six individuals in different parts of the room.
8. **PAUSE** - a very powerful technique. It can add 'weight' to what you are saying, gives an opportunity to gather your thoughts and allows your audience to take stock.
9. **SMILE** - remember a smile can be very disarming; it can help relax you and your audience.
10. **PEDESTALS ARE FOR PUSHING OVER.** Do not allow yourself to be intimidated by your audience. Do not give them power over you. Your experiences and skills are unique. When presenting, you have a captive audience; they are attending because they have chosen to and come to see and listen to you.
11. **BE AUTHENTIC.** Being sincere and credible are critical to your message. This requires you to be vulnerable, transparent and have integrity.
12. **POSITIVE THOUGHTS.** The glass is always half-full rather than half-empty. There is no such thing as a bad or hard audience; they have come to be informed and entertained. Your audience actually want you do well so...enjoy, have fun and always leave them wanting more.

*Give yourself permission - and have the confidence - to display your Human Element to ensure that you make that emotional connection!*