

## **C**ASE STUDY — ARTHUR SCARGILL

### **YOU NEED HANDS!**

**D**uring the 1970s and 1980s in Britain, the leader of the National Union of Mine Workers, [Arthur Scargill](#), led several [strikes](#) against the government's plans to scale down mining in the UK. He was then, and still is, an orator par excellence with a very loyal bedrock of support from miners, particularly in his native Yorkshire. One of the key elements he employed to make his speeches more powerful was an effective use of hand movements. On one occasion, having marched in a rally through pouring rain, he stood up at the platform to implore his audience, which consisted of both miners and other workers, to remain solid for the cause of the National Union of Mine Workers. This is what he said:

*"This time Britain's miners are not just fighting for jobs in the mining industry. Don't leave us isolated. Support us all the way until we reverse this policy." In the space of just fifteen seconds, Scargill used a whole range of hand movements thus: Firstly both hands are held up almost in a supplication to the audience. "This time" he says, "Britain's miners are not just fighting for jobs." Here he pushes his left hand to the side as if dismissing this issue. "Don't leave us isolated," he implores his audience with outstretched, upturned hands, drawing them towards him. Then comes the power punch with both hands and clenched fists. "Support us all the way." He then wags one finger away from the audience in a dictatorial manner and to rising cheers. "Until we reverse this Tory policy".*

**Y**ou probably would choose not to use all those gestures in the space of fifteen seconds, but the movements are worth remembering and practising for when you do have an opportunity of employing one or more of them to add emphasis to your spoken words.

Video  
footage  
[here.](#)

**R**emember too that your language must pass the pub test; you would not go into a bar or public house and cry out,

*"Landlord, draw for me a pint of your finest foaming ale in order that I might partake of it and thus slake my thirst."*

**S**uch a use of language would get a fairly swift and short response from the publican and you would be less likely to be served with the drink you desire.

Instead, you should be using short simple words and constructions. Use the word "show" rather than "demonstrate"; instead of "enable" use "help"; in place of "prior to" try "before".

## TIMING

Timing is critical in a presentation. I have already discussed that you are more likely to be forgiven for under-running than for over-running. Another key element of timing is the power of the pause. The pause is one of the most influential devices used in effective spoken communications. A pause just before a word or phrase and just after can highlight the word or phrase. A pause can be used to change gear or direction in a presentation. When answering questions, a pause can be used to give credibility and credence to the question and also to the value of the answer that you are about to give. In short, use pauses throughout your presentation to add weight to what it is you are trying to say.

### CASE STUDY — MARTIN LUTHER KING

#### BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS?

Passion, timing and personal involvement wins the day. Everyone remembers the "[I have a dream](#)" speech which [Martin Luther King](#) made on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, just a few months before he was assassinated. Even today, three decades later, it still makes the hairs stand up on the back of the necks of those who listen to the speech, so poignant and fiery is it. This is a speech aimed at promoting the civil rights movement and calling for an end to racial discrimination. Its most telling lines come about 17 minutes into the speech:

*"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a country where they are not judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today."*

In themselves, the words are powerful enough, because Dr King is advancing his message through a very personal experience involving his "four little children". Such imagery is guaranteed to move even the hardest of hearts.

Coupled with his tremendous use of timing, it really is a tour de force. In those 39 words, Martin Luther King pauses for in excess of six full seconds. This is how he actually delivered the speech:

["I have a dream](#) [PAUSE, FOUR SECONDS] that my four little children [PAUSE, TWO SECONDS] will one day live in a country where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today."

Full  
Speech  
[footage.](#)

**T**owards the end of the paragraph, Dr King employs three other oratorical techniques. From ". . . but by the content of their character" to the end of the paragraph he speeds up to stress the urgency of his demands. He also repeats his "I have a dream" motif for added emphasis. Finally, his voice gradually rises in volume and force throughout the speech, ending on a crescendo.

There are very few pieces of oration to match such a powerful use of the pause.

**KEY LESSON:** Martin Luther King learned his speaking style in the churches of the Southern Baptist Bible belt of the Deep South. Clearly that is not a tradition shared by all, but we can all learn to use pausing more effectively, and no matter how long you think the pause really is when you are speaking, it will actually be much more effective if it is longer rather than shorter.

## **KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER**

- Get a good night's sleep before the day of the presentation; avoid alcohol.
- Plan and prepare your appearance carefully; dress appropriately and ensure you are well groomed.
- Sit calmly for a few minutes before your presentation, concentrating on your breathing.
- Check microphones before the presentation.
- Maintain eye contact with your audience at key moments in the presentation.
- Be animated and lively, but don't go over the top.
- Use pauses and timing to add impact.

# ON YOUR FEET: DELIVERING A STUNNING PRESENTATION

## Chapter 5

Up to now we have dealt with all the necessary steps needed to get you on your feet and working well. In terms of being effective with your spoken communication, you are about 80 per cent of the way there. However, anyone who has ever had to speak in public has horror stories about things that can go wrong during a spoken presentation. In this chapter, we will look at some of the more common difficulties and offer suggestions on how you can overcome them.

Presentation  
Skills  
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### GETTING STARTED

Many people say that no matter how well they prepare, they just cannot seem to get off to a good start. Those initial couple of minutes are just purgatory, when the speaker wishes the ground would open up and swallow him or her. Getting off to a flying start is tough for most people. However, starting on the right foot is essential if your presentation is to have a feel of quality to it. It is a real skill and one that all aspiring speakers must develop. Some call this skill "Breaking the ice"; others "Engaging the audience". I prefer to call it "Going from 0-60 mph in half a second", as this more precisely describes what is required. Developing such a skill is particularly difficult for those who for most of their professional lives are expected to work in a steady, diligent, almost contemplative way. Take lawyers, for example. Their advice is expected to be impartial and arrived at after due deliberation. In other words, their clients expect their opinions to be considered. In the normal run of their commercial activity, they are not expected to rush at things. It is the same with engineers. If, for example, they are constructing a bridge, we expect them to take care and pay particular attention to detail. After all, the bridge has to be properly constructed and stand the test of time. We certainly do not want them to rush the structure up. With these and other professions, it is almost a case of deliberately slowing down the faster-moving functions of the brain to ensure that the contemplative side of the thought process wins out.

Unfortunately, public speaking requires that the brain functions much more swiftly and good speakers have to be quick at thinking on their feet, come what may. Of course, practice makes perfect, but unfortunately many speakers cannot afford the luxury of practising on clients and prospects. So what to do? One solution is to start young and actively seek out less high-profile occasions to try out your speaking ability. Debating clubs in schools and colleges are ideal starting points. Organisations such as the Junior Chamber of Commerce in the UK can give young would-be speakers the opportunity of flexing their vocal chords in a relatively non-threatening environment, or