# ***Making Conversation*** **Communications Tips**

## *"It's not what you say; it's how you say it." Adding vocal variety, being aware of your tone and phrasing makes a big difference.*

In the course of working with young adults on their college interviewing skills and older adults on "refreshing" their job interview skills, both male and female, I have noticed that the sound of their voice can significantly detract from the positive impression they wish to convey. In ambiguous or "mixed message" situations, which may occur when you are nervous, your body language accounts for 55% of the message, your tone of voice for 38% and the content for a mere 7%.[1] If you are saying that you have an expertise in something and your voice rises at the end of the sentence, an upward inflection, your statement will lack credibility. If you keep using verbal fillers people may lose interest. If they can't hear what you are saying, (mumbling, dropping word endings, speaking too softly, etc.) how can they be impressed? So, what can you do?

Try an audio practice:
Write down what you want to practice saying or write it down once you hear it on the audio recording device. Be aware that the person wants to understand what you have to say. Respect them and the interaction itself by not making them ask you to repeat yourself. Avoid an upward inflection (artificial question) at the end of a statement, "Uptalk" see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_rising_terminal, E-nun-ci-ate. Breathe.
As you listen, and it may take numerous times, graph your voice on a piece of paper. Listen to the pitch, the rhythm or phrasing of words and your volume and emphasis. A starting scientist might say:

***I am most interested in Pfizer due to its research expertise in my area of _____.***
Pitch ^ **enthusiastic** maybe a bit higher down end strong ⇩
Phrasing **(group words into meaningful phrases ) (** )
Emphasis + +++ ++ +++ ++ +++ +++

***I believe that my strengths: creativity, determination, teamwork and my ability to readily***
Pitch don't go up on any strength these are your selling points
Phrasing ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) (
Emphasis +++ +++ +++ +++ ++ + +++ +++

***adapt to changing circumstances will benefit Pfizer's leadership position in _____.***
Pitch lower the pitch here down end strong ⇩
Phrasing ) ( )
Emphasis +++ +++ +++ + +++ +++ +++ +++

Habitual Voice Markers, "umm", "like", "ah", "whatever" can be tamed. Develop an extinguishing behavior each time you hear yourself doing it (you'll be listening to yourself speak now that you are interested in how you sound). Each time you use your "crutch" word you can: verbally acknowledge that you are trying to stop –soon you will-; press your fingernail into your thumb (only hard enough to notice it) or try to take more breaths in between sentences. People would rather hear silence, than the verbal fillers which lessen your credibility. Ineffective communication skills can cause you to be perceived as less intelligent or incapable of doing the job.

**Super practical tip: Milk products can coat the throat. Avoid them and do vocal warm-ups before you speak.**

Make your best impression. Understand your communication style. Identify their communication style, so you can adapt to and be "in sync" with others. Be authentically yourself while establishing rapport. Open more doors by winning with words. ***Making Conversation*** can assist you to communicate more effectively, with confidence and ease.

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[1] Research 1971 by Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, UCLA

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