

It's not always what you say but how you say it

 By [Marion Scher](#)

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When you write an email to a friend you don't give a second's thought to your 'style' of writing, you just write. If, on the other hand you're writing a letter threatening legal action you would most likely use a very different tone - one that shouts 'you buggers better watch out, I'm coming for you...'

Using words to soothe or shout isn't always that easy, simply for the reason the receiver can't hear you. But when you appear in front of an audience, whether at a presentation, press conference or during a televised interview your voice and face says it all.

Just recently I was called in to work with two organisations that were about to make important announcements. The one was to release financial results, which showed this organisation had done very well over the last year but there were areas where the public felt they were being greatly overcharged for the services this organisation offered. So the question was, 'if you're making so much money, how come we're paying so much for what you offer?'

Quite incensed

They wanted me to coach the person who was going to face the press to deliver these results which were so good they felt sure this wouldn't be too much of a problem. When I pointed out the sort of issues the public, by way of the media, would ask about they became instantly defensive and quickly justified the reasons for their various charges, which they felt weren't unjust at all. In fact they were quite incensed that the public would even dare to question the validity of their inner workings.

To add to the problem the person chosen to announce these results, whilst a financial whizz, had never faced the media before. This adds up to what could have become a media disaster. In the end they used a more genial, experienced executive for the press conference who, very smoothly, explained their financial situation - which the media accepted like lambs.

Choosing the right 'face' to deliver the facts

The other organisation, that was also about to announce financial results had suffered from a history of maladministration and several financial mishaps over the last few years, leaving their reputation wanting, to say the least. The sad part was this same organisation, actually does a lot of really good work within their given mandate and were trying desperately hard to come right, despite ex-employees financial woes still hanging over them. The question again came down to who was going to be their spokesperson?

You may automatically think it's the CEO, CFO or chairperson but very often this person, although a great leader isn't a great orator! They feel so much for the organisation or company that the minute they hear something negative they automatically go into defensive mode, which of course immediately spells out 'they're trying to hide something' to the media and the public.

Speak from the heart

Even when we work out what key messages they must put across in their interviews, it's more important that they can say these with sincerity, passion and above all warmth and believability.

Choosing someone to talk on behalf of your organisation or company should be given a lot of thought. Remember they can do as much damage as they can good. And it's not always wise to use a professional spin doctor, as the media again see this as your company hiding behind the silken words of the professional.

It all boils down to speaking from the heart, with sincerity and honesty - and not being afraid to tell the truth, even though it may hurt a little, as long as you say what you're doing to make things right. And whether we believe you.

ABOUT MARION SCHER

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