



focalvocal

Welcome, Bienvenue and Herzlich Willkommen to
VocalPoint

FocalVocal's Free Monthly Newsletter

VocalPoint: **Issue 2**: October 2006

Welcome to the second issue of VocalPoint! The FocalVocal team and I are delighted that you are interested in receiving up to date news about FocalVocal and reading articles written by us about current issues within training today.

If there are specific questions you have regarding your training needs or areas that you think are worthy of investigation, we would be happy to hear from you and see if we can help out by doing some research and writing an article.

In this month's issue of VocalPoint Helen McNeill will be letting you know how to claim your free gift when it comes to assertiveness, but first of all

What's on?

In-house taster sessions

FocalVocal is currently offering free of charge in-house taster sessions, a perfect opportunity for you to test drive FocalVocal's method of training and our skills. If interested please e-mail monica@focalvocal.co.uk

A recent two-hour taster session conducted at PKF (UK) LLP proved hugely successful and thought provoking dialogues regarding combating nerves by 'thinking in pictures' when presenting ensued.

'PKF invited FocalVocal to deliver a taster session on Beginners Public Speaking. The attendees found it to be informative, developmental and fun. The presenter and actors struck the right tone from the very start and allowed the participants to contribute which helped maintain their focus. It was a thoroughly worthwhile session.'

John Watkins Director of Training and Development PKF (UK) LLP
Accountants & business advisers

FocalVocal Taster Sessions 2006 -2007

1. Beginners Public Speaking with Monica Lowenberg
2. Assertiveness with Helen McNeill
3. Managing Change with Chris Robinson
4. Giving and Receiving Feedback with Chris Robinson as from Nov '06
5. Work/Life Balance Helen McNeill as from Nov '06
6. Media Training with Gareth Rubin and Monica Lowenberg as from April 2007

FocalVocal taster sessions are two hours and fifteen minutes in length, conducted at your

premises by one trainer and two actors, one session can train up to 18 persons.

What's on Offer?

One free hour session of personal effectiveness training with Monika Key, particularly useful if you think a trained and experienced outsider, can help you see the wood from the trees.

For further details and to find out in greater detail the benefits of coaching, see Monika's article *Personal Effectiveness Coaching for Executives and Managers* under <http://focalvocal.co.uk/publications.html>

With a passion for helping others improve the quality of their lives, Monika trained to become a Life Coach, training with 'Coaching by design', as well as qualifying with distinction from the Life Coaching Academy, Europe's largest coaching organization. She is a member of the Association for Coaching, the UK's leading body for coaching.

"Monika has constantly been able to help me shape my thoughts positively and see things from a different (and better) perspective. A big advantage of working with Monika is that her style of coaching is not 'text-book' which I find refreshing and invaluable. She has a very relaxed, easy-going style and I would have no hesitation recommending her to anyone what was looking to improve any area of their life."

AA - Manager, Major Retail Company

If interested please e-mail monica@focalvocal.co.uk

What's New?

Corporate Entertainment

A number of FocalVocal actors such as Karen Bartholomew and Geoff Cotton perform shows to corporate clients. From January 2007 Karen Bartholomew will be offering a new show 'Raise the Spirit' a light-hearted look at the world of wine, led by wine expert (or so he thinks) Angus Tarte.

In the meantime Geoff Cotton, corporate entertainer and compère, is currently offering an act featuring songs, sketches and stand-up comedy.

The songs and sketches are all original and are accompanied by guitar or pre-recorded backing tracks. Song titles include 'I'm An Old James Bond', 'The Vegetarian Blues' and 'Why Can't You Be Like Us French?'

Geoff is also able to offer 'tailor-made' songs and stand-up comedy routines, following a suitable brief from the client. In this way his set can be 'personalised' for your audience...to the amusement of your colleagues!

For more details and an example of a 'tailor-made' song, contact monica@focalvocal.co.uk

What's coming up?

November VocalPoint

Chris Robinson, former head of training for TSB South East and FocalVocal's trainer for management development will be writing on how to manage change effectively, but until then Helen McNeill would like to let you know how you can be more assertive and

Claim your free gift box!

Don't you just love it when you get a free gift box with something you've purchased? Of course you have to wait for these offers to be available and they don't happen that often. However, there is a free gift that you don't have to wait for – the gift of deciding to adopt an assertive approach to your life. The good news is you can do this at any time!

So, what's special about this gift box? Well, thinking, feeling and behaving assertively can add many enhancements to your life. For instance, assertiveness is a path that enables you to unlock your full and true potential, as it requires you to:

- Let go of self-doubt
- Adopt a positive approach to life and decision making
- Develop a positive self-appraisal about your own worth
- Recognise the skills, abilities and gifts you already possess, instead of focusing on the one's you think you don't have

Sounds good, doesn't it? So why do some people choose not to take advantage of this remarkable offer? The answer is simple – because it requires change and the kind of change that can only be brought about by entering into a deeper level of self-awareness.

Albert Einstein once said that, "Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them", and the same goes for the decision to become assertive in your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. In order to do this, you have to be prepared to develop a deeper level of awareness about yourself, to be honest about what the un-assertive aspects of your behaviours are – and what thought patterns drive this behaviour.

This is a pretty scary prospect. Scary because the things you will discover about yourself are the very things that you most fear – things such as thinking, 'I am not good enough to go for that promotion, I don't have the confidence to handle that million dollar account, and or I can't do that because people won't take me seriously.'

However, one of the gifts that assertiveness can give you is that it will enable you to overcome these fears, work with you on putting these fears into perspective and help you find a way to handle them - so your fear will no longer hold you back. The following points highlight some of the things you will need to start thinking about on your journey towards assertiveness:

1. **Self-forgiveness** – don't keep berating yourself for all the things you consider to be past mistakes. The key word here is 'past' – they no longer belong in the present. If you don't let go of them they will continue to place limitations on you and keep you stuck! Time to move on – write down a time line and place on it some of the major mistakes that you know you have not forgiven yourself for and that you continue to use as a reason for not doing something – you know what they are! Then for each one say out loud that you forgive yourself for this, that it is your past and will no longer hold you back in the present. Well done!

2. **Self-acceptance** – appreciate what you have already achieved in your life so far, not what you haven't done. Write down all your achievements in any area of your life - I bet this view looks a lot more positive now and better than you thought

3. **Self-awareness** – this is an important one and not to be missed. Work on recognising your emotional states and how you feel when you're in certain situations or with certain people. This will start to give you clues about things/people that make you feel uncomfortable. Now you have to dig deeper and identify your uncomfortable feelings and acknowledge what these feelings might be really about. Only this level of self-awareness will enable you to move beyond them, because only when you recognise and acknowledge your feelings can you then choose to do something about them. Remember your heart and your head are joined together and you need to pay attention to both of them.

4. **Positive self-appraisal** – focus on your strengths, abilities and gifts – always think about the things you did well and points that are unique about you in equal measure to the things you feel you are not so good at. We always tend to focus and over analyse our weaknesses at

the expense of ignoring our strengths – develop a more balanced analysis of your own performance and put a Spam blocker on any repetitive self-talk that is negative. Remember the power of self-forgiveness and say to yourself, “The next time...”

5. Use your memory to help you – your memory is a very powerful computer and can download memories of feelings at any time you ask it to. Use this tool to support you and boost your energy by programming yourself to recall at least a couple of positive feelings that you relate to situations where you acknowledge that you gave a good performance. Avoid seeking out memories that are triggered off by feelings of anxiety and being outside of your comfort zone – this will reinforce your negative feelings and will act as a way of you validating your fears, instead of acknowledging them and going beyond them

Of course, like any good gifts, assertiveness is one that you can share freely with anyone around you. Think of the kind of people you are drawn to at work – I bet they are people who give you positive appraisals, value your skills, offer encouragement – these are people who have an assertive approach to life and work. You need people like this around you as you go on your journey, and others need people like you as they go on theirs. They need you because the chances are, that as you begin to praise, encourage and appreciate others, one more positive human connection has been made - and that’s one of the true pleasures of sharing a great gift.

I recommend that you read Susan Jeffers – *Feel the fear and do it anyway* – a seminal book on working on and releasing feelings of fear.

Helen McNeill is a member of the General Social Care Council, a seasoned trainer for local government and FocalVocal's trainer in communication and assertiveness skills

FocalVocal works with businesses in the private and public sector who wish to improve their communication and management skills. Businesses who

- *know that a dynamic, interactive learning environment is the most successful in helping you to retain newly acquired skills and be confident to apply them*
- *are bored with courses where you get to sit, but don't actually get to do*
- *have found it to be a bonus to have trainers and actors who are native English speakers but are also bi-lingual in German and French*
- *like the challenge of working with professional actors to test out new skills in a fun, non-judgmental environment*

If you think the same, then get in touch with FocalVocal today!

Please feel free to forward VocalPoint to anybody you feel would find it of interest.

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