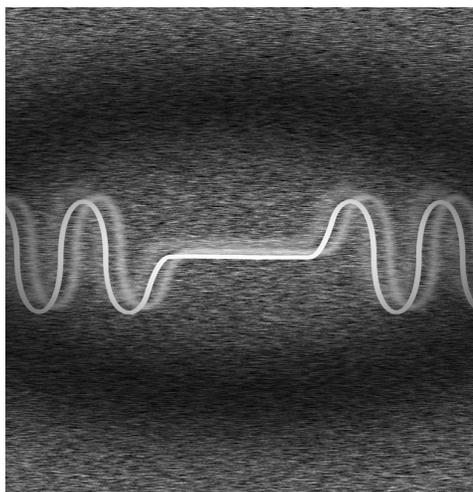


The Power of the Pause

Many speakers fear silence worse than anything else event during a talk. The irony is that getting comfortable with silence is one of the most powerful tools you have, not only for the impression you make, but also for your ideas to have impact on your listeners.



Pausing gives you time to collect your thoughts. When you pause regularly, your ideas seem better organized and more succinct. This is especially important for tough “Q&A” situations. It also gives others time to digest your ideas. Yes, we can hear more quickly than we can talk, but hearing, understanding, and impact are different phenomena. Silence creates impact. In fact, a bit of silence before any idea makes it seem more important because it sounds as if you have given the idea some thought. That’s one reason why a quickly-read speech will never have the impact of someone really talking with passion.

There are also physiological reasons for pausing. Every time you pause, you give your body the chance to exhale and release tension, so you feel more relaxed. When you inhale again, it fuels you with a well-projected voice. The faster you go, the less you breathe. The less you breathe, the faster you go... and the harder it is for your audience to track you. A communicator who is comfortable with silence looks and sounds confident and in control. It’s as if the willingness to pause, breathe, and think says to others, “I’m OK. I’m not in a hurry, and what I’m saying is so important that I want you to think about it.”

“A speaker who is comfortable with silence looks and sounds confident and in control.”

Try it. Next time you have important ideas to share—at work, at home, on the golf course—bracket those ideas with silence. Share a thought...and pause. The people you are sharing with will get to digest and integrate each idea, and you and your ideas will begin to connect with them. In the meantime, as your ideas begin to take on more importance, you’ll be breathing and relaxing more, which magically eliminates use of “verbal fillers” (umm, ahh, like, so, etc.). You’ll seem better-organized, more confident, and more in control.